

I Was Sent to Hisui and All I Got Was a God Phone and Long Ears

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Being given a mission from Arceus to meet every Pokémon in the ancient Hisui region wasn't something Rei expected, but it was a mission he was ready to undertake for his first Pokémon adventure. Doing so as a small, furry, talking Scorbunny was not something he had taken into account, however. [Legends: Arceus/Mystery Dungeon fusion concept, semi-serious]

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How to Not Start an Isekai Journey

When Rei woke up, the worst thing he feared was getting a Bidoof as a starter because he overslept.

Finding himself in a featureless void with a golden light dangling over his face was a bit out of his expectations. He tried to pinch himself and wake up properly, but the only source of ambient lighting preempted that.

"I welcome thou to my realm, Rei. Thine presence is most necessary," spoke the tiny ball with the booming voice of a theater dork.

Some puzzled blinking later, Rei pinched himself. Nothing changed, and he started to grow worried. The nerdy light took it as its cue to continue. "I am that which humans call Arceus."

"Ar... soos?" Rei asked, blinking. All that name brought him back to were sleep-inducing history lessons with a failed grade.

"Thy pronunciation requires some work," the ball said dryly. "But thine wordsmithery is not what brought thou here. Peril awaits in a land far away, and thy arrival is paramount to restore order."

Rei frowned, pieces falling into place. "Wait, is this some sort of... chosen one quest style thing? RPG style?"

"I do not know what an 'Arr Pee Jee' is."

Rei's spontaneous bout of snickering brought the orb of light to an awkward pause.

It raised its tone. "Thou shall find thyself in this land, unlike any thou had ever seen. A strange new locale in need of a bridge between humans and the wondrous creatures thou know as Pokémon."

Rei's immature laughter petered out to seriousness, contemplating the entity's words. He knew all the isekai Anime he watched would come in handy eventually! Bewilderment made way for excitement, the idea of his very own chosen one adventure enough of an incentive to shut down any pesky questions.

Save for one. "But, why me?"

"All will be known in due time. Seek every Pokémon there, and everything shall become clear."

"Seek? Sorry, I don't have much of a Pokédex or anything-"

"That can be fixed with ease."

Rei's phone floated out of his pocket, bringing the teen in high alert. He scampered into the void, but was unable to reach the ever more distant device. "Hey, wait! I've got stuff in there!"

"And more 'stuff' it shall have." Like magic, the phone shone as brightly as the ball, enough to fill the space with brightness. "May thine fate be prosperous for the arduous task ahead."

"Wait! I still haven't-"

Rei's heroic resolve to recover the phone was swiftly put to rest as the brightness increased, the whiteness blinding the boy into a daze and making way for the darkness of unconsciousness.

"Hey, are you well...?"

As Rei came back to consciousness and blinked his eyes opened, he realized a few things. First, he was now in a barren beach leading to a large clearing, the salty air reaching his nostrils and helping him wake up. Second, sandy ground made for a *terrible* sleeping spot.

And third, there was now an absolutely gigantic man dressed like an old timey scientist with a spiffy lavender beanie looking down on him with concern.

Rei would've jumped on his feet if his body didn't ache like a truck ran him over. Fortunately, the giant didn't seem malicious, kneeling down to check him up with interest. The boy felt a shiver run down his spine for more than the chilly breeze, but he remained composed as he managed to reach a sitting position. Everyone knew isekai stories always involved some strange new worlds and their inhabitants, after all.

"We don't see many like you here in Hisui... let us get you fixed up." The man rummaged through his pocket, producing some blue cream. He approached to apply some, but Rei shook his head.

"I'll pass. Just need this headache to go away..." Rei groaned, rubbing away at his aching temple. He could swear his head felt twice as heavy as before.

The giant froze in place, losing the grip on the bottle of cream and leaving it to shatter on impact. He leapt back in a panic, startling Rei as well.

"I-It talks!" Panic made way to an excited grin, and the titan pocketed his hands in a hurried frenzy, searching for something. "That is astounding! I need to document this!"

Rei was none too happy to be an unwitting curiosity, frowning at the well-dressed gentleman. The man didn't notice it, caught as he was in producing a camera that looked older than Rei's grandmother and aiming it at the boy.

The rustle and bustle of three odd-looking Poké Balls clanking on each other and falling to the ground left no time for an impromptu photoshoot.

An owl, an echidna and an otter burst out of the capture devices, turning around in confusion. Rei blinked, the Rowlet, Cyndaquil and Oshawott looking almost human sized.

The giant lowered his camera and turned to the Pokémon in a snap, sporting a horrified grimace. The escapees got their bearings, grinned, and legged it for the clearing at high speed.

"Freedom is near, my lieges!"

"Finally!"

"See ya, Laventon!"

Snickering and throwing raspberries, the three mismatched starters raced out of sight. The giant looked perturbed, shoving the camera back in his labcoat and getting on the chase at a moderate stroll.

"Wait! Don't run off!"

The jumbo-size Pokémon gave his request no regard, and the merry gang left the very puzzled Rei behind.

He blinked, trying to catch up to all the shebang he had just witnessed. A super-sized world of talking Pokémon and silly giants wasn't exactly what he expected out of his grand heroic debut, but beggars couldn't be choosers. But whatever mess he was getting into, he really needed to do something about those achy limbs first.

Rei sighed and gave a shrug, finally deciding to hop back on his feet and stretch a bit. He woobled back in place, letting out a tired yawn, and then finally spotted the thing that had just given him the back pain of a lifetime.

He forgave it on the spot.

"My phone! You're back to me!" he shouted, grabbing the device and hugging it like the softest teddy bear. Like everything else it was

about twice its previous size and had an uncomfortably spiky makeover, but these were things he had little problem with.

Rei tried to check if his data was still in place after the godly upgrade, but as he got a look at the screen, the boy quirked an eyebrow. "Wait a minute..."

Rather than his way too vast collection of silly photos, a weird sort of messaging app was open, featuring a simple message.

Be the bridge.

Rei frowned, recalling the words of the theater kid light. How the land he would find himself in would need him to bridge humans and Pokémon and other stuff lost in a sea of weird diction. He glanced over to the man in the clearing, still stuck in a losing game of cat and mouse with the three Pokémon, and in clear need of help.

With nothing better to start from, Rei shrugged and clutched the phone close, deciding to approach the man - Laventon, supposedly- and learn more of what was going on.

After a stroll that took longer than it should have, Rei joined Laventon's side. The giant was frowning and taking shallow breaths, while the victorious Pokémon enjoyed their prancing around the area at his expense.

"Oh, goodness... I knew I should've waited for Akari."

"You need to fetch those talking Pokémon, right?" Rei asked, glancing over the runaway trio.

Laventon jumped in surprise, eyes wide in shock towards the smaller boy. "You!"

"It's Rei, thank you." He placed his phone aside and winked at the man, thumping over his chest. "Let me bridge this up, alright? You can thank me later."

Laventon did not reply, but neither did Rei wait for it. He strode forward for the trio of troublemakers, putting on his mean face as he pointed forward dramatically.

"Hey, you three!" Rei's shout was enough to bring the Pokémon's attention towards him. Surprised, they came closer and looked straight back towards the new arrival.

"Oh. Laventon's got a new helper, huh," Rowlet commented, squinting his eyes and rubbing his non-existent chin.

Cyndaquil snickered loudly. "Sorry, we came first. And three's all he needs!"

"Correct," Oshawott concluded, arms folded and frowning in the cutest attempt to be stoic and intimidating.

Rei took a deep breath. "Right now it looks like he'd need you to come back. Can you do it, please?"

The diplomatic approach appeared to make waves, the three starters turning to each other in silent deliberation. Then, Rowlet stepped forward to engage Rei, bearing his stare into him.

"Let me think about it," the owl furrowed his brow, the unchanging expression making Rei wish they weren't the same height. Then, he bowed down. "Well, guess we can do it."

"That's goo-Wah!" Rei leapt out of the way mid-sentence, narrowly avoiding Rowlet's rushing Tackle.

"Not!" Rowlet proudly cackled as he stopped, turning around and ready to dish other attacks.

"That was dangerous, you know! I just wanted to talk!"

"Oh come on, that didn't even hurt!"

"We're gonna have our fun and you can't stop us!" Cyndaquil added, flames lighting up. Oshawott remained silent, but his stare betrayed no intention to go back either.

"So that's the game you wanna play." Rei rolled his eyes, clearing his throat. He pointed forward again. "If you don't stop and behave, I... uuuh... will give you a bad time. You will regret ever crossing me!"

He gave his most convincing scowl, his voice shifted to a very forced rasp that was sure to be intimidating. The three Pokémon remained silent, and Rei dared hoping his half-baked threat actually worked.

The resulting raucous laughter proved him very wrong.

"That's *seriously* the best you came up with?"

"I can't believe it, we found a bigger pushover than Laventon!"

Rei gulped, *really* regretting passing over that speech course. He didn't have much time to commiserate, however, as the stoic Oshawott finally approached, Scalchop in hand and glare aimed at him.

"Shall I teach him a lesson, my lieges?" the Water-type asked, beating the Scalchop over his other hand.

Rowlet gave him a dismissive wing gesture. "Oh, sure. You tackle that, Oshawott."

"This is going to be fun..." Cyndaquil said, already having grabbed several Oran Berries and sharing a few with Rowlet.

Oshawott marched onward, Scalchop aimed and ready to clobber. It put Rei on immediate high alert, his heart racing a mile a hour as he threw his arms up.

"H-hey, come on, we can solve this calmly! No need for violence!"

"You dared disturbing my lieges's recreational activities." Oshawott held his seashell weapon high, a bloodthirsty glint in his eye. "You shall *perish* !"

The samurai otter charged onward, blade unsheated and about to dish punishment. Rei took his impending doom with an appropriate response.

"Wah! Stop! Please! I surrender!" he shouted incoherently, throwing both arms forward and squinting his eyes closed, bringing forth all his middle schooler fighting proficiency to shove away his incoming adversary.

He felt his body propelled forward, the blow of impact was strong enough to send Rei back several feet, his whole form vibrating afterwards. Yet, he didn't feel like he was just made into pudding, instead hearing several cries melding into each other and ending in a loud *crack* .

Curious, he opened his eyes again, only to be left bewildered. Oshawott was thrown back with enough force to leave a trace on the dirt, bowling over Rowlet and Cyndaquil into a messy, Oran Berry juice-flavored heap right into a tree, which was now severely cracked and toppled over.

Rei blinked. Then decided to roll with it.

"... Suckers...?" He sounded barely convinced himself, but still tried to pull off the dorkiest menacing grin out there.

Luckily, The trio of troublemakers had better things to pay mind than his milquetoast threat level, with Rowlet and Cyndaquil staring at their dazed companion with eyes wide open.

"No way! He defeated Oshawott!" Cyndaquil shouted, his bravado and literal fire spent. Oshawott managed to get up, holding himself up with his weapon, but whatever happened had put him out of commission for fighting.

Rowlet gulped, all his smug confidence gone. "Uhhh... well..."

Rei put his hands on his sides, cackling even louder than the troublemaking Pokémon did.

"Heh. See what I can do?" He puffed his chest, making himself seem bigger. "And there's more where that came from!"

So long as he wasn't asked for it, of course.

No request came thankfully, as both Rowlet and Cyndaquil groveled down in instant penitence. "Okay! Okay! We surrender!"

"You better."

Neither of the two Pokémon attempted another cheap shot, leading Rei to sigh in relief and drop the menacing act. He went and helped the still reeling Oshawott get closer, receiving a forlorn stare from the defeated otter.

"That strength... it was nothing like anything I ever saw." With an exhale, Oshawott paced in front of his two compatriots, Scalchop on hand again. "My lieges, I failed you. I must restore your tarnished honor!"

He held the weapon high, aimed for the kill. It brought Rei and the other Pokémon in high alert.

"Oh no no no! It's okay! Honor is fine, promise!" they tried to say, but their plea fell on deaf ears. They rushed to stop.

None of them was fast enough. Oshawott closed his eyes, and thrust the Scalchop on his face.

It bonked him softly on the forehead with all of Oshawott's strength.

Oshawott whined with more nuisance than pain, falling on his butt. "Ow."

The rogue starters and Rei stared at Oshawott, then at each other, then shrugged and moved on. The boy could've said several things about Oshawott's behavior, but he decided against it. The Water-type's pride was wounded enough as it was.

As the three Pokémon patiently waited ahead of Rei, the boy heard the sound of footsteps approaching. He turned to find Laventon reaching his side, observing the pacified trio with great interest. It made Rei feel all the happier for how things went.

"That's impressive. You managed to communicate with them in an intelligible fashion and stop them from causing trouble..." He struck his chin, giving Rei a smile. "That's a fascinating set of skills. Very useful indeed."

"And I'm here to help out!" Rei declared with a smile of his own, hopping to grab his phone with glee. "But first, let's have a selfie! For Rei's first cool Hisui victory!"

The Professor and his Pokémon were more than a bit confused by what a 'selfie' was, but they all huddled down as Rei worked his way through his device, trying to see if any apps were still there. It took a bit of work, but by some miracle, Rei managed to get the camera app running and ready to snap a photo. He grinned, checking the frame on the screen.

And immediately sunk into horror.

Reflected on the screen wasn't his face, but the very small, very fluffy, very white and orange form of a Scorbunny, mimicking his very movements. Silently, with a panicked stare, he touched to his cheek, seeing on the screen the same Pokémon paw he realized to have.

The resulting scream was loud enough to be heard all over Hisui.

Welcome, everyone, to my first chapter of a new and very different endeavor than my usual. Hope you enjoyed it!

This story's concept came out of nowhere, born from discussion of how Pokémon Legends: Arceus has a plot quite close to the one of the Pokémon Mystery Dungeon games, and thinking that it would've been pretty amusing to write a story exploiting that to its logical conclusion, with the human protagonist chosen by Arceus turned into a Pokémon for the Hisuian adventure. I also wanted to write something pretty different from my usual style of stories as a way to challenge myself and experiment a bit.

It was pretty enjoyable to define Rei and some of the other upcoming major characters, and I hope even if the twist is obvious to expect the joke still ultimately landed. I don't plan this to be a completely comedic plot, but there's sure to be a lot of laughs in the future of this story.

Also, in regards to Oshawott's attempted seppuku, let's just say some choices taken with it were wholly intentional.

I hope you enjoyed this chapter, and that you'll keep looking forward to what's to come!

How to Not Make a Good First Impression

Rei continued staring at his newfound reflection, jaw slackened in abject horror. He was worryingly fluffy and a hundred percent less human than he would've liked. He tried to blink the image away to no success.

He tried to pinch himself with his stubby paw, hoping to wake up in his bedroom to be late for his Bidoof starter. It barely stung and it only reconfirmed the harsh truth.

It was real, he was there, and he was a cute little bunny.

Rei's realization froze him in place, his phone clattering on the ground as he lost his grip on it. He barely even realized Rowlet started waving his wing in front of his face, while Cyndaquil poked at his back.

"So this is what a 'selfie' entails? Interesting activity..." Laventon muttered, jotting down some notes.

"Honorable warrior, what has you aghast?" Oshawott asked, striding into Rei's field of vision with folded arms and as imposing as a human-sized Oshawott could pretend to be.

No, not human-sized. He was an Oshawott-sized Oshawott. Because they were the tiny ones.

His continued lack of reply made Rowlet shrug. "Think we lost him, guys."

"I call dibs on his share of food at the laboratory!"

Whether for Cyndaquil's voracious request or because reality had finally sunk in earnest, Rei finally started flailing his arms in distress, glimpsing on the fallen phone's screen for his new form once again.

"No way. No way!" He shouted to himself, paws squished over his puffy cheeks. "What the heck is this?"

Neither the rambunctious starters nor the confused researcher had any answer for his panicked question, but in truth Rei didn't need any. There was only one possible culprit, that theater dork light that called itself Arceus.

He shook his paws, rage piling up in his tiny form. His attempted cursing of deities with odd hobbies was cut short, however, as a foreign set of incoming steps caught the attention of his sensitive ears.

"Oh, here you are, Professor!"

Rei and everyone else turned around, and saw a young girl, looking around Rei's age, and clad in blue garb with a red scarf around her neck and a white bandanna over her head. She pouted at Laventon with a sigh. "You know you shouldn't run off on your own like that. You never know what waits out of the village."

Laventon smiled sheepishly, rubbing his neck. "Akari. Sorry, I saw something fall down from the space-time rift, and..."

The Professor didn't have time to finish, for Akari noticed the distressed and confused former human. A beaming smile lit up her face.

"Wait. That's a Scorbunny!" Without warning, she grabbed Rei and held him into a very tight hug from which the boy had no escape. "You didn't tell me we were getting a new starter Pokémon!"

After the confusion, assault, the realization and the acceptance, Rei was more than a bit overwhelmed. He was blushing redder than a Tamato berry with a tan, and his brain was mushier than a pile of jello.

And then the implication sunk in, and Rei fell unconscious on the spot.

The calming daze of unconsciousness was a balm for Rei's wounded soul. There was no need to worry for worryingly cute forms, way-too-embarrassing hugs, and plans of vengeance against cultured sources of light. He was just resting his aching back, and the moment he woke up again, he would be back in his bed, perfectly normal, and able to blame everything on some spoiled milk before bed.

"Hmmm..." Blinking, Rei's vision only registered blots of color at first, frowning out of a bright light and a searing headache. He groaned, rubbed his eyes, and readied himself to start his new day in a completely normal way, bringing himself to a sitting position.

And then his vision came back in focus, and all his hopes were dashed yet again.

He was ontop of what looked to be a hastily freed desk, with several research papers thrown around the room to make space, with a fairly scribbled chalkboard and several odd contraptions all around, and his phone by his side. He was still a tiny, white, very annoyed furball. And worst of all, his back still hurt like mad.

That and way too many prying eyes staring back at him.

"Good morning, little guy," said the man he recognized as Laventon. The girl, Akari, was right next to him, the trio of Pokémon he had met looking over Rei from appropriately themed vantage points around the room in a mixture of concern and intrigue. And accompanying them was a blue-haired woman, arms folded behind her back, and with an eyebrow-less scowl primed for Rei's very soul.

His reaction at the unknown woman was measured and calm.

"Wah! Don't hurt me! I'm too young to die!" he shouted, tiny paws forward and sweating a storm in a panic. It did not interrupt the staring.

"So it really was a talking Pokémon," stated the master of the scowl, her attention going back to Laventon.

The Professor nodded. "A Scorbunny in Hisui was already a most unusual find. One capable of parlance even more so."

"Hey, slow down a bit!" Outraged, Rei hopped back on his short feet, paw stretched in accusation. "I'm not a Scorbunny. I am a human, like you all!"

"You may forgive our skepticism, but humans do not have ears this long." To underscore her point, the woman grabbed Rei's much enlarged auditory receptors, gently stroking them up and down.

"Ghhh... !" Rei bit his tongue, shaking, yet refusing to even *think* of how pleasant the massage felt. He would not give them that pleasure!

All the while Akari looked on, hands clasped in delighted pride. "Aw, he's adorable."

Rei's face turned an embarrassing scarlet. Rowlet and Cyndaquil sung a requiem of snickering for his shattered pride.

Fortunately for the Scorbunny, however, his humiliation was not to last much more.

"Enough of this, Captain Cyllene." Heeding the call, the woman freed Rei from her grasp, allowing the boy-turned-Pokémon to get his bearings back. Everyone's attention shifted to the doorway, and so did Rei's, facing the speaker.

It was a man still in his prime, wearing an elaborate black kimono and a black and yellow coat hanging above it, complementing his jet-

black hair and the spiffiest mustache Rei ever had the pleasure to see. His scowl matched Cyllene's, staring intently at Rei as if blaming him for his mere existence. The Scorbunny couldn't break eye contact, but tried to steel himself.

"You claim to be a human. Can you prove it? You could be a changeling, here to disrupt the peace of our home."

An eyeroll and a groan later, Rei grumbled. "Look, mustache, don't you think a 'changeling' would've been sneakier than this?"

"Says a lot of your skills if you aren't."

Rei *really* tried not to exact vengeance right there and then. Instead, he took a deep breath, considering his situation. He knew his whole situation sounded unbelievable, but in the heat of the moment, he had no idea what could work in his favor. Then his eyes fell back on his changed phone, and an idea wormed in his head.

The former human cleared his throat.

"Look, I know it sounds crazy, but... my name is Rei, I come from elsewhere, and I was turned into a Scorbunny." He swallowed, grabbing his communication device and swiping through its screens. "I really mean no harm. Look! This is what I gotta do!"

He turned the screen around, now displaying the message he received for everyone to see. All humans and even Pokémon around him were mystified, the trio of starters making a totem pole to get a better look. Rei gulped in wait as everyone read out.

"Be a bridge? What are you, a horde of Bidoof?" Akari asked, eyes squinted on the message.

"It's metaphorical... I think."

Cyllene didn't focus on the whimsy, her stare bearing down on the phone. "A most fascinating device. Never seen anything like it

before..."

"Whatever it is, is foreign to Hisui." Kamado's arms folded harshly, glancing over at the scientist on his side. "Laventon, you said this Pokémon fell from the space-time rift, right?"

"Correct. It is not the first time we have recorded the arrival of foreign Pokémon due to space-time distortions, but this is still an unprecedented event." Grabbing some of the thrown around papers, the man with the cool beanie jotted down some notes quickly. "This will make for a fascinating Pokédex entry..."

The mention of the useful data catalog caught Rei's attention, but not enough to bring his focus away from Commander Kamado. The owner of impressive facial hair didn't look any more convinced of his story; if anything, his frown had grown all the harsher, glaring veritable daggers in the young Pokémon's direction.

"We cannot trust anything that comes from it. There is no way to know what it might bring." The man gestured away with a sweeping motion. "Cast him away in the wilds. Now."

"What? No!" Frowning himself, Rei threw both paws forward. "I'm not bringing anything! But you are bringing me a headache!"

"You are not helping your case, changeling." Kamado leaned closer, locking his gaze with the boy's. "Tell us why we should trust you."

The man's words were imposing, shivers crawling over Rei's back as he realized his very survival was at stake. There didn't seem much about his current situation that would earn him anyone's trust, and he needed something else quickly. And then, a flash of inspiration came.

Rei turned to the scientist, a self-assured grin on his face. "Say, Doc. You're working on a Pokédex?"

"You know what it is?" Laventon quirked an eyebrow, and all others reacted with similar amounts of curiosity and confusion, save for the ever stoic Cyllene and Kamado. With his hook working, Rei felt emboldened, stepping closer with a mischievous grin.

"I'm familiar enough. And I know you need to catch Pokémon for it." He thumped his chest. "Well, I'm your man! Err, mon!"

It was a risky move, that much Rei knew, but wherever this Hisui place was it seemed like his stunningly average set of pre-trainer knowledge was just what he needed to get by. All he hoped for now was that the humans around him felt the same as well.

A tinge of relief washed over him as Akari pondered his words. "That sounds intriguing..."

"This could be the breakthrough the Galaxy Expedition Team requires," Laventon concurred.

The consideration was a tonic to Rei's worries, his haphazard plan inching towards success. Kamado's expression remained unchanged, however, if not even *worsened* by how wrinkly his face had gotten.

The boy gulped, worry still seizing him as his mind raced a mile a minute, but before he could blurt out some other offer, Captain Cyllene stepped in between.

"If I may intercede, Commander," the woman said, catching the man's attention. "Such offer is either a sign of foolish boldness, or unheard truth. It may be worth considering the idea."

"I can vouch that he's able to communicate with Pokémon and humans alike," Laventon added, scrutinizing Rei. "There is no telling which other interesting skills he may possess."

Seeing the tide turning in his favor was a huge relief for the worried bunny boy, nodding profusely to both assertions. *Mustache man*

can't be distrustful of people he works with after all, he hoped.

Mustache man still took more than Rei felt comfortable with to deliberate, stare focused and even more accusatory. Rei waited with bated breath.

And finally, the man took on a battle stance, spreading his arms to the side and steadying his footing.

"In that case, I will offer you a chance. Come at me with all your strength," he dared solemnly.

"Commander, are you-" Cyllene's questioning was cut short as Rei hopped off the desk, a wicked smirk of audacity as he stretched his paws outward. Finally, something he had a chance at!

"Oh, I'm gonna *love* this!" Rei threw his head down, readying himself for a sprint. "Take this, mustache!"

He propelled himself forward, his quick feet bridging the distance in an instant, paw ready to strike hard for all the undue stress he felt and vanquish the man.

Kamado grabbed his face with nonchalance, brought his arm back, and *slung* Rei backwards. He flew fast, slamming the chalkboard with enough force for three revolutions before cratering down on the hard floor, harshly enough to send all the nearby folders flying.

"Owie..." Rei muttered, the whole world spinning around him as he sat again. Perhaps he had overestimated his skill a *tiny* bit.

He tried to ignore the playful snickers of Rowlet and Cyndaquil or the worried looks of Akari and Laventon as his vertigo subsided, shaking his head with a groan. Kamado scoffed loudly, relaxing his posture.

"Is this all you can do? Only an untrained weakling would fall against you," the Commander said, arms folded at his chest.

Oshawott swallowed loudly enough to earn himself a scowl from Rei, before the bunny redirected his annoyance back to the would-be sumo wrestler.

"You just caught me off guard! Round two time!" Rei jumped back to a stand. His jelly-like feet gave up, and his butt met the floor with an undignified ow .

"There is no need for repeats," Kamado turned away, not even granting the bunny a further glance. "You are weak. Powerless.

"But you may potentially prove useful. Captain Cyllene, prepare him for a trial run. I trust in your judgement."

Rei's ears twitched, a puzzled frown on his face as he thought to have misheard. The man's subsequent eye contact with the blue-haired woman proved he didn't.

Laventon shared into his surprise. "You mean-"

"He wanted a chance? Then we will give him one."

And with a final, harsh stare, Kamado took his leave. With the man gone, Rei finally took a sigh of relief. He had no idea how, but he was safe for the time being.

He slowly got back up, rubbing his aching back with a grimace. The reminder of his poor showing only made him stare at his paws with a tinge of disappointment. What happened to that conspicuously well-timed power boost from earlier?

Perhaps sensing his question, Oshawott gently patted the bunny's shoulder. "Do not bemoan your fate, my fellow warrior. Commander Kamado's strength is unrivaled across Hisui."

"Man, sure hope so..." Rei exhaled, still eyeing his new set of hands. It was already difficult being a Scorbunny- being the *weakest* Scorbunny out there wasn't a much more enticing prospect.

As he continued to commiserate his condition, however, Captain Cyllene cleared her throat. Once everyone's attention was back on her, she spoke.

"We have fooled around long enough. Please follow me, we're offering our guest a tour before we head for my office." The woman strode for the exit without skipping a beat. "Laventon, Akari, you too."

"Yes sir," both of the remaining humans said, following right past her. Rei didn't take much longer to come along, and so did the trio of Pokémon, all heading for the woman's personal office.

As they paced through the building, Rei took a chance to look at his surroundings, all while his would-be guides filled him in on the important matters. Apparently, they were part of the "Galaxy Expedition Team", an elite research team under Commander Kamado, all coming from different regions out of a shared interest in uncovering more of the history and Pokémon of Hisui. They were divided in several Corps, each with a specific task, such as Captain Zisu's Security Corps, Captain Pesselle's Medical Corps, Captain Tao Hua's Supply Corps, Captain Colza's Agriculture Corps and Captain Sanqua's Construction Corps. Rei got a chance to have a cursory look of each of them, getting a hint of their very busy commitments in helping Jubilife Village. As everything became clearer for the small bunny, the entourage got back where they started, entering the room right next to the one Rei woke up in. It was quite a bit larger and felt much more open, with only a pair of working tables and a fairly filled desk near the very end of the room, right next to windows to the outside, flags of the Galaxy Team, another chalkboard and a few paper-filled lockers on the sides. A lone Abra was taking a nap on the side, looking quite out of place in the serious work environment.

"And rounding up everything is us, the Survey Corps, tasked with the exploration and research of Hisui and its Pokémon." The blue-haired woman stopped in the middle of the room, turning to Rei and the others just ahead of the paper-filled desk. "I'm Captain Cyllene, in charge of operations."

Rei nodded, curiosity spiking as he turned around. "So, who else is part of your group? The Prof, Akari, and...?"

"No one else. It's just us."

Laventon's comment gave the bunny pause. He stared at him with an arched eyebrow. "What? Why would you assemble an entire research team only to shaft the actual exploration branch?"

Rei's question made both the Professor and Akari frown at once, seemingly agreeing.

"Pokémon are pretty terrifying. No one wants to risk more than necessary." The nervous chuckle Laventon let out told Rei that the man wasn't taking it as well as he was putting it.

"And that is why we're most intrigued in what you're going to bring to the table," Cyllene added, interceding and grabbing a few items from the lockers. She went back to the bunny right after.

"I'll keep this brief, since you are privy of some details already." The woman's tone grew sterner, more authoritative, comparable to Kamado's before. It put Rei on high attention. "This is an assignment with the purpose to evaluate your usefulness to the Galaxy Team Survey Corps. You are to bring us a Bidoof, a Starly and a Shinx.

"Do that, and you will be inducted in our ranks. Fail, and you will be cast aside in the wilderness to your death."

Rei listened carefully to each and every word of the assignment, knowing his survival would depend on it. Afterwards, he yawned.

"Just that? No need to be so dramatic." Rei punctuated it with a nonchalant shrug. His easygoing reaction was quite a contrast with the whispers between everyone else that followed. "Hey, what's wrong?"

"No one in the Galaxy Team has ever caught more than one Pokémon at a time," Akari explained, offering a pleading stare to her superior. "Captain Cyllene, isn't that a bit much?"

"He is an extraordinary Pokémon. As such, I expect extraordinary results if we are to keep him as one of our own."

Rei gave a lazy wave. "Sure, sure. It'll be a piece of cake."

"Quite bold for your size." The Captain's scowl grew fiercer, no doubt confused by the one-eighty of Rei's attitude.

The bunny saw fit to explain, paws behind his neck and a grin to match. "Catching Pokémon is the simplest thing in the world. Even the dumbest person could do it."

Laventon and Akari's looks of concern told him such a statement came off as massively overconfident. That only helped reassuring the bunny further; if a task so easy was being made to be an arduous quest, that only meant he didn't have to worry all that much.

Cyllene placed her hands forward, revealing what she brought: a fairly modest-sized bag by human standards, and quite a few familiar-looking red and brown-colored spheres, if much less advanced than he was used to. "You are to wear this satchel. It includes a few essentials for exploration, and a few Poké Balls for the purpose of catching new Pokémon."

She kneeled to offer the items, and Rei graciously accepted them. He considered the bag, almost twice his Scorbunny size, staring at it from every angle to get how to put it on.

"Need help?" Akari asked, leaning down as well. It made Rei's cheek flush just a bit redder, turning the other way.

"N-Nah," he muttered, and with a heave slung the satchel over his shoulder, wearing it like a makeshift, way-too-loose bandolier. After placing his phone inside the pouch, Rei brought his attention back to

the Poké Balls in his other paw, a bit different than what he was used to, but no less recognizable. "So, these still work with a throw, right?"

"They do." Cyllene's attention moved then to the trio of Pokémon following from the sidelines. "Given your shown weakness, you are permitted usage of one of Laventon's research Pokémon as support."

"Huh?" Rei's ears twitched in surprise, gazing over to the Professor. "Can I?"

The Professor gave a sheepish, accepting smile. "They listened to you more than they ever did with me, so no big loss."

"Well, thanks, then." A courteous nod later, Rei had approached the trio of troublemakers he had to deal with before, standing in a line before him. They all looked pretty okay with the arrangements, some more than others.

"Alright hotfeet, who are you gonna choose?" Rowlet asked, beak twisted in a smirk and with wings folded to his puffed chest.

Cyndaquil jumped between the owl and the bunny, waving both arms with a huge smile. "Me! Me! Choose me!"

Rowlet pushed him out of the way, scowling all the while. "Quiet down, Cyndaquil. I'm the smartest of us."

"And I'm the fastest of us!" With the angriest stare his always shut eyes could muster, Cyndaquil stomped back to his compatriot. "No way I'm letting you get a vacation for free!"

"But that's not for you to decide." The bird splayed his wing forward, enough to keep the echidna at bay and look back at the former human. "So, what's *your* pick? You don't want someone so annoying as partner, right?"

"Better than someone snotty, for sure!" said Cyndaquil, sneaking out of Rowlet's block and glowering at the Grass-type.

The would-be frowned back. "Say again?"

"Again!"

They glared at each other, locked into a stalemate of entitlement, snout-to-beak to stare the other into submission. Rei grumbled out, clearing his throat.

"Alright. I pick Oshawott."

The harsh words of the bunny boy made all three Pokémon turn around and jump on their feet, none moreso than the otherwise silent and calm Water-type.

"M-me?" Oshawott's eyes were wide and his mouth agape, but he quickly shook his head and coughed out, voice lowering several octaves as he bowed respectfully. "I mean. If that is your wish."

Rei nodded in response. He side-eyed the now not-so-quarreling twosome, now looking like the very face of bewilderment and disappointment.

"What? Why *him* ?" Rowlet's tone was pleading, in desperate need for an answer.

And with a half-lidded stare, Rei answering did. "I'd rather be with the one that's mildly competent between you all."

The fact neither Rowlet nor Cyndaquil were able to conjure a retort told Rei they reluctantly agree, heading back for Laventon's side with a wave to their Water-type friend, which Oshawott returned.

The otter then held his scalchop to his heart in solemn promise, gaze held high. "I shall honor your trust, my liege."

"Sure, sure." Rei waved his new companion off, his eyes firmly on the Captain once again. "So, what now?"

"If you are ready, you will be accompanied by Laventon and Akari to the Obsidian Fieldlands." The woman traded a wordless nod with her subordinates, and another look to Rei. "I expect glowing results."

"And I'll provide," Rei said with an assured wink. That was enough for Cyllene, breaking ranks and allowing Rei, Laventon and Akari to leave the office, with Oshawott in tow.

Akari lowered her head, whispering to the bunny's ear. "You got yourself in quite a pickle, you know."

"You act like I have much of a choice," Rei replied with an exhale, adjusting his satchel closer to the chest. Akari couldn't disagree.

"Very well. If we're ready, there's only one thing to do." Laventon's gleeful smile split his face. "Time for research, my chaps!"

His exhortation was met with agreement, and the little team headed outside the Galaxy Team's main building, allowing Rei his first proper look at what the human settlement looked like.

Even just at a glance, Rei felt like he had stepped on the set of some old timey TV drama: the village wasn't particularly big, with the Galaxy Team's headquarters easily towering over all the other one story tall buildings, but it was filled with activity and coming to and fro. He could see the camps tended to by the Agriculture Corps a short distance away, the main street leading to one of the major exits by his side with a caravan parked out in the opposite end, and the row of businesses from what Rei suspected was the town's shopping district, all leading to another, guarded exit. He could even see some sort of pasture not too far from their path, with a couple Pokémon frolicking freely.

"So this is your village, huh." Rei continued to shift his gaze around, noticing all the locals's attention gravitating towards him. Noticing

that, Oshawott stepped in between, arms folded like the stoicest, cutest bodyguard out there.

Akari nodded, a glint of pride as she led the way through their surroundings. "Yes, Jubilife Village. It's filled with people of all kinds, be they members of the Galaxy Team or simply people in search of fortune or a new home. Everyone is welcome, so long as they help out."

Rei listened with curiosity, taking note of the wares, clothing and even photography shops on the path ahead, taking notice of some blond guy discussing with one of the vendors. And then, a fragrant aroma of ginger soy sauce caught his nostrils. "Hmm... what's this smell?"

"That's Beni's potato mochi, for sure." Laventon chuckled, pointing behind them to a small tavern at the roads's intersection. "The Wallflower is the only restaurant of the village, but our chef sure makes it count!"

Another sniff ensured that Rei's curiosity intermingled with his hunger. Perhaps, they could schedule a victory feast there, after things were dealt with. He grabbed his phone and snapped a picture as a reminder.

Rei's celebratory plans were shortlived however, interrupted by nearby whispers. A glance later, he quickly understood he was the object of some kids's contemplation. He waved at them with a grin and a "Yo".

They ran away screaming not a second later.

Rei groaned. "Are the locals normally so... fearful?"

"I'm afraid that may be on you," Laventon said with an uneasy smile. "Pokémon are dangerous creatures no one fully trusts. A talking one is the stuff of nightmares for many."

"Figures..." He sighed, frowning back to his very furry and quite definitely not human body. "Tough luck I got, huh."

"This is why the Pokédex is so important. Completing it will allow us to know more about Pokémon, and make people less afraid of them."

Rei nodded, but his head wasn't quite in the discussion. He looked over his paws again, and his loose-fitting satchel bouncing over his body, reminding him of the upcoming mission. Even if the assignment was easy, the deck was *still* stacked quite a way against him, and all his gained bravado couldn't hold for too long in front of the very real possibility of failure. And even if he made it, he didn't feel comfortable with how much suspicion he was getting, so far.

He shook his head, trying to distract himself, keeping his mind on the road and the near future. At least, until he found Akari leaning closer to him, pushing the edges of his mouth upward without warning.

"There, put that frown upside down." She grabbed him in her arms, offering him a beaming grin. "We're here to help you out with this, alright? You can count on us!"

The relief Rei felt was dwarfed by how softly he was being manhandled. "H-Hey! I'm not a plush!"

"Aw, you're adorable." Akari proceeded to hug him quite like a plush, and Rei's crimson hue could be confused with a new shiny form of Scorbunny. He tried to wrangle himself off the wanted-yet-unwanted attention, without much success.

"Oshawott! Save me!"

"I am afraid cuddles are too much potent a weapon for my skills, my liege."

Rei didn't know if to be grateful or annoyed at that. His ears twitched at the sound of steps, though, and both he and his compatriots

realized someone was coming their way.

"My, my, this is our latest curio, is it not?"

Rei finally managed to move his head, noticing the blond man from before. Now that he was closer, he could make out his blue and white work uniform with yellow accents, with a large bag filled with wares on his back. He gave off a familiar aura to the bunny boy for some reason, and likely moreso for the Survey Corps members, acknowledging him with a smile.

"Oh, hello here. I thought you were still off to the Coronet Highlands," Akari said, placing Rei back down and letting him return to his natural white color.

"I was back in town to stock my wares, and I decided to stick around after hearing of this little guy." The new man got quite a bit closer than the Scorbunny would've liked, a glint flashing in his eyes. "Not often do you see a talking Pokémon, after all."

Scorbunny glared back. "And you are...?"

"Oh, my apologies." The man gave off the sunniest smile Rei had ever seen, hand over his heart as he made a half curtsy. "My name is Volo, merchant of the Ginkgo Guild and lover of all things mysterious."

Laventon corroborated with a nod. "He's a big help in giving us tips about interesting research locations."

"I only go where my thirst for knowledge leads me." Volo once again lowered himself to Rei's height, petting him gently. "And there's a lot to learn about here."

Rei dodged further petting with a hop and a scowl. "That's gonna be a hundred bucks per touch, blondie."

"Witty, are we?" Volo chuckled, his mirthful laugh making way for a pensive mumbling as he struck his chin. "Where do you come from, I wonder? Are you a gift from the rift, or a portent of doom?"

Rei shrugged. "I'm Rei, and I have no clue."

The answer seemed to entertain the man, and the Scorbunny hoped that would be it. That was already the *fourth* scrutiny that day, and noticing a crowd of curious onlookers forming around them was not helping matters.

Laventon may have recognized the growing situation, as he stepped in with unease. "Sorry, we're still trying to figure out things and he's about to get his skills tested."

"Understandable. No one stays in the Galaxy Team without proving their worth, isn't it?" Nodding to his own question, the man produced a few bottles out of his bag, providing the bunny with them. "I think you may need these, Rei. Some Potions, if things don't go as planned."

"Huh, thanks." Blinking away the surprise, Rei accepted the gift and placed the medicines in his satchel.

"You're welcome. Hope we'll meet again in the future." With another vibrant smile, Volo stood back up, adjusting his bag. "For now, I have to meet up with Ginter. Don't want the old man to get on my case again..."

As swift as he had appeared, Volo headed past them, dismissing the group with a wave and a wink.

Rei adjusted his satchel for the new weight, never losing sight of the blond man as he headed for the caravan. "Weird fella."

"He's not so bad, once you get past his eccentricities," Akari said with a shrug.

"I guess..." Giving another look around, Rei sighed. "Can we move on, though? I don't like all the staring."

Laventon agreed. "Sure. Obsidian Fieldlands, here we come!"

And with that proclamation, the Survey Corps, Rei and Oshawott moved forward for their mission.

Quite a few minutes of walk later, the entourage came into view of what the Professor and Akari described as the 'Obsidian Fieldlands'. And for a kid that spent most of his life stuck in school or his room, it was as far and away quite unlike anything he was used to.

In front of the bunny and his compatriots stood a large lot of untamed wildlands, several hills and trees dotting a landscape with nary a manmade structure in sight, save for the tents branded with the Galaxy Team's insignia a short distance away. Instead, a large, likely ancient tree and a fairly big peak ruled the scenery, while even from a distance several Pokémon could be heard and spotted going through their day. It was untainted nature as far as the eye could see, and Rei couldn't deny to be curious of what the area had in store for them.

Laventon was the first to speak, arms outstretched to the wilderness. "Welcome to the Fieldlands. They're the closest of our survey areas, but no less breathtaking than any other."

Rei had to agree, enjoying the scenery enough to snap a couple pictures with his phone as he followed the humans to the tents.

"This camp will serve as our mission outpost for the time being. Feel free to come back here for rest and assistance."

"Gotcha, Prof. So, where do we catch those Pokémon?"

Akari took some steps forward. "They're not too far from here. Follow me, and don't fall behind."

"Meanwhile, I'm going to stand by here for any update. Best of luck, mates!"

Parting ways with Laventon, Rei steeled himself and followed after Akari, thinking of nothing but the path ahead as they approached some patches of grass. He grabbed one of his Poké Balls, feeling the wooden exterior over his paws.

"Are you nervous, my liege?" Oshawott asked, taking Rei's side.

"Not too much. I know how to use these things." He rotated his arm, warming himself up. "With a good throw, I won't even need to talk things over!"

Akari quirked an eyebrow back to him. "You had Poké Balls where you came from?"

"Sorta. They looked a bit different, though."

"Well, then why don't we try it out?" The girl pointed forward, towards a brown Pokémon Rei was all too familiar with. "Just remove the safe and throw it at that Bidoof. That should be easy enough to start."

Rei found himself agreeing. Bidoof were some of the most endearingly unthreatening creatures known to man, and from the way they were strolling through the grass without a care in the world, Hisuian ones didn't look much different. They were the perfect Pokémon to show his prowess against.

"Heh, of course." Rei held his Ball high, a cocky grin splitting his face. "Watch and learn, Akari! This is how a pro does things!"

He pulled the safe up, made his arm do several revolutions to build up power, and *threw* the Ball at the harmless rodent.

It barely flew a few inches away from him and landed down gracelessly, and way far from the intended target.

Rei's face lost all color, looking back at his paw. Only then did he realize how *much* less nimble it was than his human hand.

"Oh, dammit."

That was *really* gonna suck.

This chapter took quite a bit longer than I wished due to real life commitments taking priority, but overall, I'm pretty happy with it. It was tricky to try and balance a lot of the necessary setup and exposition, but I feel to have done a good job. But of course, you'll be the judge, here!

Also, I wanted to take a moment to give a shout-out to krytonator and his story *Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Legends: Arceus* , a pretty funny little story with a similar (but quite different) execution to this story and an enjoyable protagonist in Eli the Hisuian Sneasel, and suggest anyone to see it. We're also working on a little crossover for fun, *The Mysterious Sneasel and the Adorable Scorbunny* , serving as an AU combination of our premises. For anyone who wants to see more Rei in between updates (and quite a bit of Eli), that's another story to check out!

I also wanted to thank Ander Arias, horseradish-sprout, Preppiecube8347, Cottonmouth25, AwesomeFury, S and Kitsu-19 for their kind reviews, all thirty-four people who favorited this story, all forty-five people that followed this story, and PurimPopoie and Epicocity for their help betaing this chapter.

Not much else to say, but I hope to provide the next chapter of this story pretty swiftly, and that you'll keep looking forward to what's to come!

How to Not Engage Wild Pokémon

All things considered, Rei wasn't in a bad situation, he thought.

Sure, he woke up as a Scorbunny sent someplace away from his home. Yes, he had staked his survival on the fact the local Galaxy Expedition Team needed someone capable to catch Pokémon easily. True, he had just found out his new form had a very terrible throwing skill, putting everything into jeopardy.

It wasn't bad. It was *worse* .

He remained frozen in place, standing on one foot and with a paw outstretched, gazing over the failed Ball. Not too far from it, the Bidoof he attempted to catch wasn't even trying to escape, or realized what was going on.

Akari came closer, and patted his head gently. "It's okay, took me a while to get a hang of the throws as well."

The display of affection was enough to snap the bunny out of his trance, shaking his head several times over.

"N-nah, it was just a bit of bad luck!" Rei beamed, grabbing another Poké Ball, pulling the safety up and rotating his arm for another attempt. "Next one will go much better!"

With his pride on the line, Rei put all of himself in gripping the Ball with his paw, eyes fixed on the airheaded rodent ahead. He steadied his breath, pressed his feet, and *threw* .

The Ball sailed all the way skyward, above not just the Bidoof ahead, but the ground, the grass, the trees, and anything else in the general vicinity. A faint splashing sound in the distance sunk Rei's attempt in full.

The Bidoof tilted his head, unaware of what was happening. Rei, instead, only watched over the lost Ball.

He forgot how much he sucked at geometry.

"I believe your plan is succeeding, my liege! The Bidoof looks confused at your tactics!" Oshawott declared, pointing forward with his paw. The Bidoof barely reacted, munching over an Oran Berry.

Rei shot a glare in the Water-type's direction, opening his satchel to rummage for another capture device. He tried to ignore the beads of sweat raining down his face.

Akari craned down and glanced over the bag's contents with him. "Careful on how you throw these, those Balls aren't infinite."

"I-I know. It's just... a bit of performance anxiety! Yes!" Rei licked his paw and pointed it up in mock contemplation. "And the... the wind is all wrong! I need a better vantage point to do this!"

"There are quite a few hills you could use for that." Akari pointed right next to them.

"Not enough vantage from that point!" Rei waved his paw dismissively, grabbing Oshawott into a headlock and taking grand steps away from the girl. "Gonna look for a better one! We're going to return victorious!"

The bunny punched the sky, and then immediately sprinted through the open field. He wasn't sure if Akari bought his shameless lie or not, and neither did he care to check if she did, already blushing profusely for his poor showing as he rushed as far away from anyone's sight as possible.

Way to waste perfectly good bravado, Rei thought to himself, gritting his teeth.

He didn't know for how much he ended up running away from his shame, just that after a while he found himself a short distance away from the same river that probably ate his previous Poké Ball, not too far from a guarded bridge as well. It seemed distant enough from the base camp and Akari for him to finally stop, heart racing a million beats per second and fur drenched in sweat, letting Oshawott fall to the ground.

"Anf... anf... finally out of sight," he mouthed between heavy breaths, doubled down and with paws on his knees.

Rousing himself from the dirt, Oshawott tilted his head. "I question your behavior, my liege. You were narrowly away from success!"

"No I wasn't!" Rei frowned, looking over at his fluffy, accursed form. "I tried to throw Poké Balls before, and I was quite good with it... with my human hands. Not these paws!"

He pressed the much less dexterous extremities over his head, brushing all over his fur with worry, trying to scrape at even the slightest solution. It was not very effective.

"Crud, crud, *crud* ! This was my one chance!" Rei whined, looking on the verge of tears. "They're gonna throw me out! I'll die all alone!"

He was in a full blown panic, hoping for something, *anything* that could offer him a reprieve from his worries. In his moment of despair, however, he felt a warm hand over his shoulder, bringing him to notice Oshawott's solemn expression.

"You have nothing to worry about," the otter said with a confident smile. "I shall follow and perish together with you."

Rei scowled harshly. "You're *not* helping!"

Oshawott blinked in confusion, and Rei decided to steady his breath, paw on the heart until he could steady his nerves to a semblance of normalcy. Freaking out was not gonna solve anything, and at that

moment, he really couldn't afford to waste more time panicking. He sighed, recentering himself.

"Alright, let's step back. We can still do this... somehow," the boy told himself, gazing at his surroundings in search of opportunity.

It didn't take long for Rei to notice another little group of Bidoof, just as absentmindedly distracted as his prior target, right at the foot of a fairly steep hill. He entertained the possibility of running all the way up and just toss the Ball down like a rock, but he trusted the laws of physics as much as he trusted his current body. He needed something more foolproof.

Her tapped his foot down, lost in thought, gaze wandering to and fro until it settled over Oshawott again. His Pokémon partner was mulling over ideas of his own, scratching his head with his Scalchop as he did so.

And then, Rei beamed, punching his open paw. That was it!

"Of course, you wield a weapon! You are more used to your own... flippers?" Rei shook his head, uncaring of the proper term as he rushed by his side, producing a Poké Ball and showing it to the Water-type. "I can't throw this, but *you* can!"

He held the capture device a bit closer to his savior, his smile a bit wider than necessary. It led Oshawott into deep, Scalchop-less concentration.

"I should throw the capture device to the Bidoof in your stead?" He frowned a bit. "That sounds somehow wrong."

"Hey, you were entrusted to help me," Rei tried to say, only to quickly turn sheepish. "Uhhh... liege orders, or something."

"Very well then." With a smile to rival Rei's, Oshawott snatched out the Ball, holding it proudly like some sort of ancestral weapon. "I

shall be worthy of your trust in me! I will be the harbinger of our victory!"

In a sweeping forward motion, Oshawott reached forward for the Bidoof, aiming for them and then thrusting the Ball as high as he could, like a mighty slice against a powerful opponent.

The Ball fell down like a rock right on the otter's head, opening on contact and sucking the Water-type inside. One, two, three shakes later, a plume of smoke left the Ball, signifying the successful capture.

Not sure if to find it impressive or ridiculous, Rei facepalmed.

He grumbled all the way as he took the Ball from the ground, opening it to summon a fairly confused Oshawott back to him.

"Have I succeeded, my liege?" Oshawott asked, a gleeful smile brightening his face.

"I'm... not sure." With a headshake and a sigh, Rei stashed Oshawott's Poké Ball away and glanced over at the still unassuming Bidoof, unwitting source of all kinds of trouble. "Maybe we should forego the Bidoof for now. And throwing Balls."

Oshawott nodded along. "What do you suggest as our next objective, then?"

"They did say we had to catch a Bidoof, a Starly, and a Shinx. Maybe we could go for the second one."

"Starly, rulers of the sky. A most fearsome choice," the Water-type commented, gaze sharpened upon the sky. It made Rei quirk an eyebrow.

"Where I come from, they're a minor nuisance at best." He folded his arms, squinting at his surroundings. "But we're gonna need finesse to do this."

"What do you suggest?"

The bunny grinned. "You'll see."

It didn't take long for Rei and Oshawott to find a small flock of Starly, a small way above a hill. Both Pokémon hid in the tall grass, carefully approaching the birds by sneaking through the blades of greenery, eyes trained on the one Starly most distant from the flock.

"Our target is ready, my liege," whispered Oshawott, his Scalchop covering his mouth.

"Yes," Rei agreed, pressing his satchel over his chest. "Now, be quiet. We can't alert that one too early."

Trusting on Oshawott's cooperation, Rei strode forward with measured steps, careful not to make any excessive noise. Step by step, with bated breath, the Scorbunny eventually arrived inches away from his target.

He swallowed, steeling his nerves. He flipped the satchel open, aimed for the Starly, and hopped skyward like the bunny he now was.

"You're mine!" he shouted, falling down with the bag ready to trap the bird in.

Yet, that one split second was enough for the Starly to take to the sky, depriving Rei of his prize.

What it didn't deprive him of was falling facefirst on the floor, the satchel falling down the hillside, and eventually dragging him along into an awkward rolling fall.

"Waaaahhhhh!" Rei's whole world was spinning at high velocity, trying and failing to stop the ever faster speeding through the ground, dirt, grass and quite a bit of pain.

Rei's tour on the blender express lasted all the way down the hill and quite a bit of plain, only coming to an abrupt end as his whole form slammed on a tree on the way, harshly enough to embed his shape on the bark and let way too many berries fall all around him.

He groaned as he fell down on his butt, his whole world still spinning more than he wished. "Why does this keep happening...?"

Grabbing his head and standing back on unsteady feet, Rei's balance returned before his headache subsided. Hearing the sound of rustled grass, the Scorbunny turned to see Oshawott rushing down the path, a wide grin on his face.

"What an amazing maneuver, my liege! Rolling all the way down to the Horseshoe Plains!" He pointed skyward, where their attempted catch was now soaring freely. "Surely, that accursed bird will not see an offensive from here coming!"

Rei elected to ignore the comment, instead trying to rub the headache away with a grimace. By the time it was gone, so was the Starly, now far away in the Hisuian skies.

"Wonderful..." Rei groaned with an eyeroll. He then glanced around, searching for another bunch of Starly, trying not to be too dejected at his bad luck. They were now in the middle of a plain, dotted only by a few patches of grass, trees and the occasional rocky formation, going all the way to some shallow waters and what looked to be the same river as before. There were a few Pokémon around, but they were few and far in between, and none of the ones they were looking for. Truly, the day couldn't have gotten better if it tried.

But as a loud neigh echoed throughout the plains, it felt like the day was still up for the challenge.

The noise was enough to make Rei hop on his feet from the surprise, and lead every other Pokémon in their general vicinity to run away from the area with great haste. A soft sound of clapping hooves filled the air, and without warning Oshawott tackled Rei to the

ground, diving right into a patch of nearby tall grass, hiding them from sight.

"What the *heck* was that for?" Rei asked, groaning at Oshawott as the Water-type let him go.

Oshawott ignored his question, instead grabbing his Scalchop and wielding it in waiting. "So, the legends were true..."

" *What legends?*"

The clapping of hooves, closer than before, heralded Rei's answer. The bunny and the otter turned around, and Rei's jaw slackened again.

Not too distant from them a way, way larger than normal Rapidash was slowly striding forward, its movements calculated and deliberate, scanning the surroundings with its piercing crimson eyes. It looked ready to fry anything on its path, and was striding sway too close to them for comfort.

"Who supersized that Rapidash?" Rei was as loud as a whisper could be, hoping his servile samurai sidekick happened to hold the answer. Oshawott considered the giant horse, looking unusually cool.

"That is an Alpha Pokémon. The largest, strongest and most territorial Pokémon around." He squinted his eyes, lowering himself just a bit as the Rapidash strode their way. "That Rapidash has been the bane of the Galaxy Team for quite a while. The screams from Captain Pesselle's rooms were something..."

Dread crawled down Rei's spine, instinctively gravitating his attention solely on the Rapidash. The mental image was enough to make him swallow. "Okay, I get it. So we gotta ignore that thing."

A sharp headturn from the horse later, Rei's expectations were as buried as his head in the grass, right as an intense Fire Blast flew

above them.

"Eeeep!" whimpered the bunny, voice muffled by his paws as the flame was extinguished.

"Alpha Pokémon often have very fine hearing and an aggressive temper. If the Rapidash spots us, we are done for," Oshawott explained in a whisper. It made Rei's anxiety just a bit worse.

The bunny held his breath, keeping his eyes peeled on the dangerous Fire-type that was still staring a bit too intently in their direction. Only the moment it finally turned away did he allow himself to wheeze, his heart racing.

He gulped down the lump in his throat. There was only one thing to do, as he glanced over the wide, scarce-in-hiding spaces-plains they were in.

"Okay... at my three, we sprint away as fast as possible, alright?" he asked, already placing his paws down for a quick running start. Oshawott nodded wordlessly, preparing himself to rush as well.

A deep breath later, Rei aimed for the complete opposite direction as Alpha Rapidash. "Good. Three, two, one...

"Go!"

Both the Scorbunny and the Oshawott broke into a sprint at once, bursting with speed through their one way to safety. Rei didn't care whether Rapidash noticed or not; he had to be speedy, and he had to get as far away from that danger as possible.

His determination burned bright, and the flaming patches on his soles even moreso. Their grassy retreat morphed into a blazing inferno before Rei could even leave it.

The boy froze in place, and so did Oshawott as their only safety net turned into crispy cinder. Then a loud whinny resonated all around

them, and they both noticed the angry, giant, and very impossible to escape Alpha Rapidash they caught the full attention of.

Rei let out a tense chuckle. *Maybe* that was not the best plan they could've gone through.

Not one to disdain diplomacy however, he gave the Alpha Pokémon a sheepish smile and raised paws. "Errr... w-we were just gonna leave in a hurry, mister Alpha. No need to be violent!"

His tone was uncertain, but sincere. The bunny wanted to hope that could be enough to get them out of that pickle.

Said hope died faster than the galloping that brought Rapidash into a collision course with a massive Double-Edge on the ready. Rei hopped to his left, body sliding into the dirt as the Alpha narrowly missed.

Rei gulped and attempted to jump back on his feet, but by the time he did Rapidash had already turned all the way back, a Fire Blast primed and fired for the bunny.

The boy stood there like a Stantler in the headlights, the attack too fast to even dodge. At least until a soft blur slammed into him, tackling Rei out to safety.

"Gah!" shouted Rei, rolling over the grass once again as Rapidash's attack sailed past. He frowned in confusion, forcing himself back up with a groan.

And as he did so, his savior was made apparent as Oshawott looked back at him, a smile over his face and Scalchop drawn like a mighty sword.

"Worry not, my liege!" He bonked his chest with pride. "I'll lay my life down for you!"

Rei blinked, even more so as Oshawott took another battle stance, ready for Rapidash's next motion. He wondered if it was just another showing of his samurai act, and yet, he sounded completely serious about it. He really *did* want to fight for him.

And at that point, Rei connected the dots. He may have been thrown in who-knows-where, stuck as a Pokémon, but in spite of everything, he was still Oshawott's Pokémon Trainer.

The realization bolstered his confidence, and without further ado splayed his paw forward. "Alright, keep moving! And Tackle Rapidash!"

Oshawott gladly accepted the order, leaping into action against the approaching Rapidash. His movements went nimble, ricocheting off the Fire-type's body strongly enough to blow it further back.

"Not bad!" Paws pumped in excitement, Rei paid notice to Rapidash's actions, as the flaming horse reading a Fire Blast aimed for Oshawott. "Duck! Move left and right to keep yourself hard to hit!"

Oshawott dove to the side, the searing blast of flame passing by his side before he could Tackle it again, knocking the mightier Pokémon further back by a few inches. It was the start of a dance of back and forths, with Oshawott's nimble movements bringing him close enough to strike forth. The Rapidash didn't move much, perhaps trying to understand what to do, but that only gave them all the more time to dish some damage in, bit by bit.

Rei felt more and more emboldened. It wasn't quite what he expected, but he really felt like a Trainer now. And together with Oshawott, they *would* make it through.

"Tackle, once again!" Oshawott was fast, heading to deliver another attack. Rei grinned, sharing a look with Oshawott, both sure of their upcoming victory.

He pointed his paw forward as the impact became imminent. "It's time for reckoning, Alpha Rapidash!"

And reckoning it was.

For Oshawott, as Rapidash slammed its hoof forward right as the otter came. The non-move struck, and Oshawott meteored all the way back until he cratered over a nearby rock in the most painful of embeddings.

The whine was high-pitched, and harsh was Oshawott's expression as he fell face-first on the ground.

"Oshawott! Are you okay?" Rei asked, hurrying by his side, all of his confidence gone faster than the grass he burned along the way. All the while, Oshawott attempted to stand again, Scalchop propped on the ground.

"I-I'm good enough, my lieg-" He flopped down, body twitching in pain. "Oof..."

The otter wasn't unconscious, but he may as well have been with how pained he looked. Rei trembled, his attention back in front of him; now, it was only him and the Alpha Rapidash.

The actually barely harmed, slowly approaching, and more than a little peeved Rapidash with its gaze all for the bunny.

Rei forced the least confident grin he ever wore. "Y-you know, having such anger issues is not very healthy. You should look into positive out-"

Rei could see the flames being prepared in Rapidash's mouth, and the bunny yelped in paw-raised surrender.

"Okayokayokay, your outlets are positive enough! Sorry!" he blurted out, head held down and body shaking.

Rapidash continued to charge the Fire Blast, and Rei knew that was it. Nothing would save him. And he didn't even get to catch a single Bidoof.

He closed his eyes and waited for the end, listening to the crackles of the fire.

A splashing sound and a displeased whinny made Rei peer his eyes open.

Rapidash's muzzle was now covered in rapidly evaporating water, and the attack was sudden enough to stop the developing Fire Blast from being launched. Following the target line in reverse, the confused Rei found the culprit.

"You're not... going to hurt my liege!" shouted Oshawott, barely halfway standing, with another sphere of Water Pulse almost ready to throw. It dispelled not a second later as the otter fell again.

"Oshawott, stay put! You're in no condition to fight!"

"This is nothing! A true samurai does not surrender to the bitter end!"

Rei clenched his teeth, moreso as Rapidash aimed for Oshawott, galloping into a Double-Edge that the Water-type had no chance to dodge.

The bunny felt the time slow down. For as much of a headache he could be, Oshawott didn't deserve to be hurt even more. He couldn't allow it; he *had* to do something.

Rapidash held his horn down, fierce, the gap closing with each second. Rei's mind raced a mile a minute, too many thoughts crowding his mind, preventing him to act.

And so he did not think. He sprung forward at full velocity, thinking of nothing but the *speed* to stop it in time.

And like magic, Rei's feet blazed through the ground, striding at great steps, the whole world a blur as he *rammed* at full force against Rapidash's body, barging into the Double-Edge.

The impact was sudden, powerful, and threw Rapidash a few feet away, further than any of Oshawott's attacks did. The world returned normal, and so did Rei, falling to his knees with his heart thumping over his ribcage.

The bunny clutched his chest, taking heavy breaths and with utter bewilderment at whatever had just happened. Oshawott, by his side, seemed just slightly less surprised. But that was no time to question it, as he noticed the state of Rapidash.

The horse had now a large bruise on the point of impact, and was laying over the ground.

He had hurt it.

"Yes!" Rei threw his paws to the air. His whole body hurt all over, but he did it. There was a chance for them!

Rei's joy was however cut short the moment saw Rapidash bringing itself back up. In spite of the pain, the horse was still way, way more fighting-ready than either him or Oshawott.

He had only a few short seconds to make use of, and that left only one option.

Rei made an about face and grabbed Oshawott over his back, and ran as fast as his achey legs allowed him.

"So long, sucker!" shouted the bunny, his whole body running on fumes and adrenaline, just trying to put as much distance as possible between them and the flaming horse of death.

Rei had no clue how long did he ran for, nor where he had been heading towards. All he knew is that at some point he had found himself near the same river he and Oshawott had been before, a short distance from a man-made bridge and its guard, and with the Alpha Rapidash nowhere in sight.

Only when that final realization hit did Rei's adrenaline finally ran out. He dropped his Water-type companion down like a sack of potatoes, and then let his body fall groundward and allow fatigue to catch up to him.

"Quite... impressive sprint, my liege..." Oshawott muttered out.

Rei wheezed, eyes still on the sky above. "Panic... is quite the booster."

The former human and Pokémon chuckled out together, at least until the sting of their bruises made itself known again. With a grimace, the bunny forced himself back to a sitting position, opening his satchel and grabbing the various medicines that Volo guy offered him before, mentally thanking him for those. He placed one over the ground, opening the package and dipping a paw into the medicine, before carefully hovering it above Oshawott's injuries.

"I think this is gonna sting, so grin and bear it," he told the otter, spreading the medication and massaging the wounds slowly and methodically. He could feel the Pokémon squirm under the healing paste, and yet Oshawott *actually* continued to wear a stupid, forced grin all the way through.

Realizing that made Rei shake his head. "Quite literal minded, aren't you?"

"It is my duty to obey your every wish, my liege," said Oshawott in reply, still showing off his not-so-winning smile. As he finished placing the necessary medication, Rei exhaled.

"You don't have to keep calling me 'my liege', you know. Just 'Rei' is fine," he told his Pokémon. "Just like I can call you..."

Rei blinked, drawing a blank on what he wanted to say. He tilted his head. "Wait, what's your name again?"

"Oshawott."

"No, not that. Your *name* name."

"Still Oshawott."

"That's not confusing at all." Rei rolled his eyes. "Don't you Pokémon have some way to distinguish yourself from others?"

The Water-type shook his head. "Some do, others don't. But I'm the only Oshawott I have ever met. So, I'm Oshawott."

Rei gave his Pokémon partner a good, long stare, then shook his head. What the otter said made absolutely no sense to the boy, but who was he to judge a Pokémon, anyway?

"Well, suit yourself, then." Rei turned his attention to the Potion next to him, working to patch up his own wounds to distract himself. "But you could sure use a unique name. You're not just some random Oshawott."

Oshawott rubbed his chin, hearing that offer. "A unique name... fascinating."

He seemed to ruminate the possibility for quite a while, but the Scorbunny didn't press the topic further, instead focusing on rubbing over the medication on his bruises, biting his lips to avoid shouting.

As he finished, he faced Oshawott again. "Still, just call me Rei. I'm already getting used to this body, I can do without being called a liege or anything."

"Are you not feeling comfortable yet, Lord Rei?" was Oshawott's immediate question.

Rei refrained from complaining, accepting the minor improvement. Instead, he looked over his body before answering, still looking so small, so foreign. He placed his paws on his cheeks and pouted.

"It's all weird. My body just feels... *wrong* now. I'm so small, I can't throw anything, and I'm weaker than a Magikarp on dry land. And we *still* haven't caught anything." Rei exhaled, a forlorn look on his face. "I'm used to being a loser, but it's not *this* blatant, normally."

Rei let his body fall back on the soft grass, gaze affixed to the sky. He didn't have much time to contemplate his situation until then, but letting it all out really underscored how annoying everything had been so far. Even by his standards, that was quite the string of failures to deal with, and with nothing good to show for it.

Yet, Oshawott brought himself to a sitting position too, arms folded as he contemplated the former human. "You may be a Magikarp, but even the weakest of them all has the potential to become a mighty Gyarados."

"But they need to grow stronger to do it, don't they?" Rei groaned, sighing once more. "Thanks for the samurai wisdom, but it's not gonna help."

"I do believe you can already harness mighty powers. Your Quick Attack is pretty impressive, for someone unused to fighting."

At that, Rei arched an eyebrow. "Wait, which Quick Attack?"

"Is it not what the dash you harnessed against me and the Alpha?"

That statement made something click inside Rei's mind. He hadn't thought about it, but the strange burst of speed he felt, the power he had made use for both times... it was quite reminiscent of a

Pokémon move, in the end. And if that was true, it changed everything he expected.

Understanding that made Rei hop back on his feet, more energized than ever.

"Oh, now it makes sense! I *am* a Pokémon, after all!" Rei wore a face-splitting grin, both paws punching the air with glee. "This is so great! Fantastic, even!"

Oshawott gave his superior a pleased nod. "Have you found a way out of your worries, Lord Rei?"

"No idea! But it's something, and we can use something right now!" Way giddier than before, Rei turned all the other way, smirking as he took a deep breath. "Alright, let's try! Ember!"

He spat, trying to unleash his inner flame. Nothing happened.

"Ember... !" Another try, another failure.

"Ember..." Yet again, he barely let out some hot air.

He groaned in frustration. "Yeeesh... cried victory too early."

"Just shouting the name won't do." Oshawott sounded sterner, standing again and reaching Rei's side. "You need to *feel* the move. Harness it. Make it your own. Only then will you be able to use it."

Rei turned to the otter, once again looking unusually cooler than normal. He put his paws on his hips. "Think you can help me out?"

"It'd be a pleasure and a honor." Oshawott gave a respectful bow, already drawing his Scalchop.

Rei giggled. "Thank you."

It wasn't much, but as Rei and Oshawott prepared for some training on how to let the Scorbunny use his moves, the former human was

starting to have a good feeling about it. The whole situation still sucked, sure, but perhaps there was a light at the end of the tunnel for them, and he was glad for Oshawott's help.

However, their training attempt didn't have time to get off the ground.

"I knew someone was here! The smell and noise didn't lie!" The high-pitched voice boomed through the area with the fierceness of a thunder in clear weather.

Both Rei and Oshawott interrupted the proceedings, and before they were aware of, a blur of black and blue darted right in front of them with a burst of electricity. Rei quickly identified it as a Shinx, a fierce-looking, wildly grinning one that stared at them like a child who just found his favorite toys.

Rei was puzzled by the sudden arrival, glancing over to Oshawott. "Uhhh... friend of yours?"

Oshawott shook his head, and the expected confirmation made him gulp, observing the Electric-type again. Whoever that was, he wasn't an ally.

"You dare intruding our territory! You will pay for your mistake!" The Shinx roared, electricity cracking all around him as he glared to the twosome. "I'm Joltfang of the Lightning Tribe, and you are my prey now!"

And here we are again, a bit earlier than last time! As the first chapter to not be strictly following the game's path, this one was equal part thrilling and worrying to write, as I knew I had to sell well the comedy at the heart of the story I have in mind, alongside some serious little bits here and there to keep the tone even. Writing Rei and Oshawott's interactions in particular was quite a joy that helped forming the backbone of this specific chapter, and I hope their budding silly friendship was as fun to read as it was to write.

Much like the previous chapter, I'd also like to give a shout-out to another author, this time Navarchu and his Pokémon Mystery Dungeon-based

Liberators Universe , consisting of the two stories *Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Liberators of Fate* and *Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Heroic Dreamers* , both offering some fun twists on the typical setting and format of one. They're stories with a lot of heart and solid themes shining through, and well-worth someone's time!

I'd like to thank AwesomeFury, Ander Arias, Ri2, Revamped Persona, MBS41, Thxtzhxndvtx and S for their kind reviews, all forty-five people who favorited this story, all sixty-four people who followed this story, and PurimPopoie and Epicocity for their help betaing this chapter.

And once again, if anyone would like to check more Reibunny-related fun, the AU crossover *The Mysterious Sneasel and the Adorable Scorbunny* is still ongoing on krytonator's account. It's a fun little story on the side, and if you enjoy the tone this story goes for, chances are you will like that as well.

I hope to deliver the next chapter as swiftly as possible, but until then I hope you will keep looking forward to what's to come!

How to Not Get Yourself Mauled

Rei should've seen some kind of complication coming. Hisui sure loved to throw things at him, after all.

Said complication being a way too cute, slightly battle-worn Shinx that poised himself as some heroic warrior still caught him off-guard, however.

And so, the Scorbunny cocked his head. "The *What* Tribe?"

The Shinx recoiled in shock, his stare went blank and his jaw slacked open- until he snapped it shut in the harshest of scowls. "How *dare* you not know of us, outsider?"

"Well, maybe *because* I'm an outsider..."

"That is no excuse!" Joltfang stepped his foot with force on the ground, sparks flying all around him. "The Lightning Tribe are the rightful rulers of the Obsidian Fieldlands, from the depths of Lake Verity to the heights of the Grandtree, blessed by the Heaven's Reckoning as the sole inheritors of this land!"

Rei blinked, trading a quick glance with Oshawott. The otter gave a puzzled shrug. The Shinx did not stop.

"You have overstepped on our sacred ground, and for that, you shall be punished!" A maniacal grin split Joltfang's face, his fangs in full display as he glared at the duo. "So says I, Joltfang, first of my name, and future ruler of all!"

He puffed his chest and let out further sparks, taking on a battle stance with the bravado of a million soldiers, ready to dominate the battlefield.

Neither Rei nor Oshawott knew how to respond. The otter even turned to his partner, whispering beneath a Scalchop. "I believe our

friend here is a touch overdramatic, Lord Rei..."

Rei stared at the otter. He then exhaled, and turned back to Joltfang.

"And a tad bit blind, as well." He tilted his head to the Security Corps member standing on guard a bridge away. "Isn't that guy also overstepping?"

"He is, but I already beat him up the first time! I can remind him of his transgression later." The Shinx sprinted forward, dashing right for his targets. "The punishment of your ignorance takes priority!"

Joltfang zoomed for them, and Rei leapt on the side in shock, dodging the Shinx and the tide of uprooted grass he left in his wake. Joltfang was not satisfied, however, twirling on the spot and preparing himself for another dash.

Rei gulped, hopping to a stand again. For all his ridiculous boasts, the Shinx looked ready to back up his claims.

And then, a paw holding a Scalchop covered his field of vision, reminding Rei he had a hero of his own.

"Stand aside, Lord Rei, he's dangerous." Taking a stand in front of Rei, Oshawott thumped his chest. "Protecting you shall be the first heroic duty of Musashi, the Brave Fencer!"

Rei crooked an eyebrow. "Wha-" Oshawott shoved his free paw up, silencing the Scorbunny with his winning smile.

"Yes! I have embraced a proper name for myself, and an identity to match!"

At that, Rei's eyes went wide, and words failed him. Did he *seriously* thought that was that the time for that chararade?

'Musashi' held his Scalchop forward like a mighty saber and not an ounce of self-awareness. He *really* did think that.

Rei slapped his forehead, but Musashi beamed triumphantly. "I shall be the righter of wrongs, the defender of the weak! The dutiful retainer of my Lord, I am-"

"Too loud!" Joltfang sprinted in without warning, tackling the Oshawott into a roll that Rei narrowly hopped out of the way of.

"Oof!" Musashi eventually found himself robbed of his smile and pinned to the ground, the Shinx above him and gleefully aware of it.

"You talk too much! You are nothing but a *stepping stone* on the path for *my* glory! Act like where you belong!"

Joltfang stomped down with force inversely proportional to his indoor voice, enough to make the Oshawott uncomfortable at the underscored point.

"You dare interrupt a warrior during their introduction? Have you no honor?" Musashi frowned, Scalchop held tight as he wriggled under the Shinx's grasp.

"Honor is for those who deserve it! Weaklings like you only deserve *defeat* !"

Joltfang brought his foot down again with the might of an exclamation point, only for Musashi to brave fencing it away with a Scalchop swipe, launching both in opposite directions.

Neither gave in, and swiftly raced at each other again, Scalchop meeting fangs meeting Water Pulse meeting Discharge in a rhythmic back and forth. It was a dance of attacks and counters, one they where they both attempted to overpower the other.

From his distant position, Rei could even hear slices of boasts and declarations constantly cut by the exchange of moves, with enough shouting and overpowering to be a battle on its own right.

The Scorbunny groaned. Great, now there were *two* of them.

He sighed and slapped his cheeks, focusing back on the ongoing fight. Musashi was trying his best, but Joltfang was relentless. As things were, they couldn't avoid the fight and run like they did with the Alpha Rapidash.

Rei clenched his paws, as Joltfang jumped out of the Oshawott's slice and forced him on the defensive. The Shinx was completely taken in the battle, and the former human knew what to do.

And so he placed his paws on the ground, held his head high, and *sprinted* forward, channeling all his desire for speed into the fastest Quick Attack he could bring forth.

Which meant a half-decent jog climaxing into a harmless shove that only pushed Joltfang a few inches away and brought Rei back on his butt with a whine.

The Scorbunny groaned, looking over to the Shinx now next to Musashi. He barely had any sign of injury, but he *did* have a scowl of pure disdain primed for the offending human.

"What was *that* ?" Joltfang snarled, electricity enveloping him and making his bared fangs glimmer.

Rei gulped, his heart racing. "Uuuh... a-a Quick Attack. I think."

Joltfang *grimaced*, snorting in disgust. He lunged for Rei, scorch marks of electricity outlining each heavy step.

"You *dare* calling that an attack?" His glare was sharper than Musashi's Scalchop and more heated than Rei's typing. "A *weakling* like you is not allowed to *sully* my battles with such amateurish performance!"

Musashi tilted his head and raised a paw. Joltfang decked him in the stomach and threw him a few feet away.

"You, keep yourself out of this!" He didn't even turn away from Rei, body hunched over and ready to depart. "You want a Quick Attack? *This* is a Quick Attack!"

Rei had questions, but the Shinx blurred into speed before he could ask. A rocketing tackle barrelling into him and throwing his body away in the air was the eventual answer.

"Gaaaaaah!" shouted, hurt radiating all over his body as he landed gracelessly on a tree's bark, head on the dirt and butt in the air. He groaned, squinting his eyes back open. An upside-down and very smug Joltfang welcomed his sight back.

"See that pain? That is what you must aim for! Concentrating your speed, your *being*, on a single point forward! *Seize* your target and ram into them at full force!" The Shinx's grin grew cockier, and hunkered down again. "Like this!"

Rei's eyes went wide open, and he half-rolled out of the way to an awkward stand. The tree *exploded* into a tempest of splinters as Joltfang carved a Shinx-sized outline right into it, the rest of the wood and leaves falling down right away.

And then Joltfang glared back at him. Rei's fur stood on end.

There was no escaping it, and so Rei lowered his stance himself, mirroring the Shinx's pose. He had to meet him head on.

The Shinx's words came back to him. Rei concentrated, tuning out everything that wasn't the ornery Shinx way too close for comfort. In that moment, it was the only point, the only *thing* that mattered.

Rei's target was locked on. His muscles tightened, power surging in his legs. And the world became a blur as he meteored for Joltfang, the Shinx retaliating with the force of a speeding bullet.

Their Quick Attacks met halfway, ramming into each other. The strike was fast, the speed matched, and both Rei and Joltfang were

harmlessly blown backwards. Both left traces with their feet as they braked to a halt, but the failed attack put no dampen on the Shinx's bloodlust. He threw himself at Rei with the same ferocity as ever.

Rei wheezed, forcing himself to quickly prepare his Quick Attack again; he aimed fast, propelled himself, and the two Pokémon clashed in mid-burst. They were locked at a standstill, bodies pressed and shoving at each other. Rei gnashed his teeth, pushing forth against the pain and slamming into Joltfang.

The Shinx flew into an arch in the sky, righting himself an inch from the landing. Rei stood on wobbly feet, wheezing, his eye catching Joltfang's state. His fur was ruffled from the impact- but he was beaming brighter than the sun, as if the pain meant nothing.

"Yes! Yes ! That's the power! The drive! The direction!" His smile morphed into a challenging glare, and already he was in his sprinting position. "But you can still do better. Again!"

"W-wait-" Rei tried to match with a Quick Attack of his own, but Joltfang had no regard for his preparation, bursting forth like a bowling ball.

Rei landed on the fallen bark in the most painful strike ever. Joltfang strutted forth with no regard for the aching Scorbunny.

"You take too long!" The Shinx sneered, stomping into the ground. "You must summon the power as quickly as you embrace it! Only a *weakling* could fail that!"

The words were no less condescending than before, and yet it only made Rei more confused as he wobbled up again, barely noticing Musashi's shouts of concern. He wasn't sure if the Shinx was mad that his opponent was weak or trying to whip him up in shape, or some unholy combination. Was this some kind of weird whatever tribe ritual or something?

He choose to set his confusion aside, preemptively readying a Quick Attack before Joltfang could sprint into action again. His hurt caught up with him, however, and his legs gave in to a ruinous fall, dropping in the grass halfway into motion.

Joltfang spat, glaring down on the former human as their gazes met.

"What are you? A *Goomy* ?" He jabbed a frontal paw forward. "Your life is on the line! And *this* is the best you can harness? You are nothing but second rate!"

Rei's paws clenched, digging into the dirt as his stare fiercened back. He had no idea what was going on in the Shinx's head anymore, and in all honesty he didn't care either; he was *an utter jerk* and that was enough.

He felt power surging into him again, his adrenaline pumping all the energy he needed to stand again. And as soon as he did, he meteored forward at maximum velocity.

"I'll show *you* who's second rate!" Rei shouted, as loud as his charging steps. The Shinx was a pest- and it was time to *squish* it!

The Scorbunny's sheer need to wipe Joltfang's grin off his face brough all of his energy to the fore, slamming into him with the force of a speeding train and the relentlessness of his misfortune. The Shinx had no time to dodge- and soon found himself tasting the dirt, rolling down until a rock stopped him, finally motionless..

Seeing him groaned *almost* relieved Rei from what an awful day he had been through, as the Scorbunny stopped and took deep breaths. Musashi's slow clapping only added to the satisfaction.

And then the Shinx stood back up with a grin of his own, and Rei realized the battle was far from over.

" *Now* we're talking! That Quick Attack was almost decent!" Joltfang summoned forth his lightning again, more vivid than before. "Now

you are worthy of being defeated by me! Thank me for this privilege!"

Energized by his inner voltage, Joltfang sprung to action again, the grin he wore making clear the gloves were off. Rei gulped, but swiftly blurred into a Quick Attack of his own, the move coming naturally. They clashed halfway, head-to-head, once more trying to overpower the other. Neither would give in, once again.

And then Joltfang's grin widened. His electricity enveloped him again, and bolts of lightning surged from the Shinx.

Rei yelped in pain as the Discharge coursed through his body. He cried out and fell down on his knee, fur crisped out to extra fluffiness.

"Lord Rei!" Musashi's cry belied his arrival, but another skyward lightning halted him. Joltfang laughed, his ego increasing as much as his energy waste.

"I'm done with the warm-up! Prepare yourself for the true Joltfang!" The Shinx lunged forward, not even bothering with a move this time.

Rei grimaced, his body heavier. He forced himself to twist, Quick Attacking his way out of the Shinx's range and letting the ornery jerk miss his mark. He didn't make it far before his strength gave in, and the former human on all fours, his heart thumping harder as he struggled for air.

Rei knew it was just a temporary measure; Joltfang was even staring at him in utter contempt again. His opponent would not let them go until they were gone, and he needed a better option than face him head on again.

"Is this all you can do? Was that Quick Attack your only trick?" Joltfang asked, venom drenched in every word.

The ticking clock had started, with the dash-for-brains already preparing his next assault. It forced Rei to zip his eyes through the

vast nothing around them, each rock, each tree and even 'Musashi'- and he finally grasped his straw of choice.

"M-more or less... still working on that." Rei put on the shakiest grin of confidence he could wear on short notice. "But I know someone who is much better at fighting than me."

His poor attempt still roused Joltfang's interest, frowning at the bunny. "Who? Who would it be?"

Rei pointed to the side, towards the Pokémon dutifully following the exchange. "The other trespasser, my friend Musashi, here."

"The Brave Fencer!" Musashi threw his Scalchop up, patting his chest to give himself a tone.

"Brave indeed." "In fact, he's the bravest and noblest of all Oshawott Samurai of the Obsidian Fieldlands! None can compare to his blade!"

Mostly because there were no other Oshawott Samurai in the Fieldlands as far as Rei knew. He swallowed, hoping the technical truth would do more than just get Musashi all pompous.

Joltfang pondered, and pondered, and then glared back at Rei's samurai friend, paws on the ready to sprint again.

"You have such a great reputation? And you *didn't tell me* ?" He threw himself into a Quick Attack at full speed. "Your list of transgressions keeps growing! You will *pay* for this!"

Musashi had enough time to throw his Scalchop up and making himself and Joltfang bounce backwards on impact. That did not impede the Shinx's fury, immediately charging on further offensive as the Oshawott retaliated with Water Pulses and slices of his Scalchop.

As Musashi continued to hold the rambunctious warrior at bay with swipes and blunt force, he sent the Scorbunny a quizzical look. "Lord Rei, what are you-"

"Trust me on this!"

Rei's snappy declaration was all his loyal subordinate needed, putting on his best grin as he resumed his duel with about twice the pomp, engaging Joltfang into another verbal sparring at the same time. As Musashi continued to try and make his newfound title meaningful, Rei gulped and put himself back into position. That tactic had failed before, but surely Joltfang's forced training would come in handy now.

And so, as brave fencing and fierce slamming mingled together, Rei aimed and blurred into speed, rushing for Joltfang.

And reached a screeching halt as the Shinx decked him in the face. Rei rolled backwards to an awkward stop, earning himself a scowl as his opponent dodged one of Musashi's Water Pulses.

"I *know* you want the pleasure of being beaten up by me, but I'll deal you later. Strongest first!" was Joltfang's curt reply, charging at full force for the Oshawott and leaving Rei back in the dust.

Rei just stared, trying to process the abrupt derailing while the two hammy fighters chewed the scenery further away. His single method to get through that fighting-happy jerk was foiled before it could even land.

He hopped back on his feet and kicked out a pebble with extreme prejudice. "Dang it!"

The frustration-enhanced stony bullet cut through the air, straight as an arrow, and beaned Joltfang right in the back of his head.

"Ow!" The Shinx grimaced, his sparks of Discharge petering into nothingness.

The sudden reaction brought Musashi to a stop mid-slice, and Rei to quite puzzled blinking. All stood still until Joltfang frowned to the heavens.

" *Who did this ?*" shouted the Shinx, his voice booming throughout the Fieldlands.

Rei swallowed his admittance, while his Oshawott friend continued to hold his best heroic pose impression. Joltfang scanned around for the obvious answer, and the Scorbunny could feel his heart bumping all over his ribcage.

And then Joltfang pulled off his most joyous, beaming smile as he gazed skyward.

"Of course! The Heaven's Reckoning itself! It has finally blessed me, and with the sky clear of clouds even!" His grin grew wider, his voice raising an octave a word until it echoed to and fro, "A miracle truly worthy of the chosen hero of the Lightning Tribe! Above all other Shinx! The greatest there was, is, and *ever will be* !"

He punctuated his statement with a booming display of lightning, spreading to the heavens like fireworks devoted to him and him alone. Rei and Mushashi stared wordlessly to the egotistical display, with the Oshawott in particular giving the Shinx an apprehensive look, finally lowering his arm. That was probably a concession of superior theatrics, or something.

But where Musashi saw concern, Rei saw opportunity. He grinned and headed forward, clapping his paws rhythmically.

"Yes, the Heaven's Reckoning has finally chosen you, great Joltfang!" He clasped both paws to his chest, Joltfang finally won over by the attention. "Why don't you... uuuh... appease it with your most powerful Electric-type attack? Fire it again to prove your worth! And make sure to charge it veeeery long, too!"

Joltfang blinked and stared blankly at Rei, and for a moment the Scorbunny worried that his ruse was too blatant. Said fear was crushed faster than the grass the Shinx thruck his foot against.

"True! The sky shall know who is in charge here!" He gazed at the sky, as if to challenge the azure above them all, his body exuding electricity from all pores. "So be it! I shall bring forth a Heaven's Reckoning of my own!"

And with a booming stomp a pillar of electricity stabbed the sky, and Joltfang's booming shout radiated electricity all throughout it, charging up all of his current into a Discharge ready to blast through. The wind rose, forcing both Rei and Musashi to hold their paws to their eyes.

Oshawott frowned, Scalchop held high for protection. "That is immensely powerful, Lord Rei... !"

"And it's exactly what we need now!" Rei jabbed his hand inside the satchel, grabbing a Poké Ball and pressing it firmly on the ground.

He took a deep breath, ignoring the sweeping air over his fur, and stared straight at the Shinx that was too busy to notice him. He held a leg up, breathing steady as the electricity crackled in the air. They had only one chance.

One, two, three seconds passed, and Joltfang caught glimpse of Rei's own preparations. He frowned through the electric surge.

"You *dare* interrupt-"

"I dare indeed!" With a sweeping, fast kick and a huge grin, Rei kicked the Poké Ball forward. "It's time for *your* reckoning!"

The device flew fast, cutting the air in a straight line for the Joltfang frowned, the Discharge coalescing and reaimed for Rei and Musashi, tendrils of lightning blasting forth into an expanding Discharge.

Rei and Musashi steeled themselves against Joltfang. The Poké Ball meteorized. The dome widened.

The sphere cut through. The electricity inched forth.

Voltage rose, fur stood on end.

And the Ball bonked Joltfang.

The attack vanished as fast as the Shinx was absorbed in the device. One, two, three shakes ensued, and then the Poké Ball stilled with a plume of smoke.

Joltfang was caught.

Rei collapsed on his knees, finally breathing again as he felt his heart thumping into overdrive. He stared at the Poké Ball, and smiled in relief. "Whew... made it."

He stood there, taking a few seconds just to let his body rest up, glancing over Musashi to see how he was doing. The Oshawott was thankfully unharmed, even clapping his flippers in applause as he joined his side.

"An impressive job, Lord Rei! Quite the unrivaled performance. Albeit your heroic declarations could use some work still."

"Aw, really?" Rei groaned, his ears drooping with his deflated spirits. He shook his head and recovered his dignity however, looking over the Poké Ball. "No matter. Better deal with this guy..."

With a gentle kick, the Ball burst open, and out came Joltfang, turning around and blinking as he materialized back, sitting on the grass.

"What's going on? Did I win? Was I blessed by the Heaven's Reckoning again?" Joltfang grinned more than he should have, each question louder and bolder.

Rei frowned, holding the Poké Ball up. "No. I caught you."

And so Joltfang's pride was shattered, and instead he snarled at Rei with the harshest scowl he could.

"You *captured* me? The *chosen* of the Lightning Tribe?" He sneered, glaring daggers at the wooden sphere. "That is impossible! Preposterous! I can't have been bested by a- a *device* ! It's absurd!"

"And I have been turned into a Scorbunny, so absurd is the order of the day." Rei groaned, much less intimidated as he glanced over the Shinx. "Maybe you should 'act like where you belong' now."

The way Joltfang gnashed his teeth in suppressed anger was oddly satisfying to the Scorbunny, but it did very little to put the rambunctious Shinx in his place.

"This will not stand! I will *never* submit to the likes of *you* !" Sparks flew and yells were thrown, and Rei idly questioned if he should've recalled Joltfang to get him to chill some.

That didn't prove necessary, as Musashi stepped in with folded arms and the most stoic demeanor he could roleplay.

"You should show more respect for Lord Rei, thundermancer." The Oshawott pointed at his liege with his Scalchop in a grand display. "He has managed to face the Alpha Rapidash himself, with enviable boldness!"

Joltfang froze, his rebelliousness fading to nothing as the words sunk in. Rei tilted his head; did facing that flaming horse of death count as another Lightning Tribe blasphemy or something?

The way Joltfang's jaw opened wide told the Scorbunny otherwise.

"Y-you *faced* it? *The* Alpha Rapidash? One of the pillars of strength of the Obsidian Fieldlands?" His eyes were wide open, primed for Rei in sheer disbelief. "And you *lived* to tell the tale?"

Rei blinked, but then nodded wordlessly. They *did* live, so that wasn't a lie.

And so Joltfang shut his jaw open into a wide smile, his bravado resurfacing as he walked closer to Rei and Musashi.

"Hah. Impressive!" He checked them both out, his grin the slightest bit warmer than before. "If you managed something like that, maybe you aren't *that* terrible."

Rei tried to object, but Joltfang gave him no way to; instead, the Shinx strutted all the way in between him and Musashi, a paw over his puffed chest as he grabbed his former opponent close.

"If you're gonna keep facing strong opponents, I *guess* I can grace you with my presence." He threw his paw up, charging some electricity in it with a grin. "Thanks to you, all of great Hisui shall know of Joltfang's glory!"

And so he fired the Discharge skyward, like fireworks in clear sky in honor of their newfound, as of yet one-sided friendship. Rei and Musashi looked at each other and decided to roll with it.

"Well, at the least, we got one of our tasks done." Rei unwrapped himself from Joltfang's vice grip as the sparks faded out, stashing the Electric-type's Ball in the satchel. "Now we just need to catch a Starly and a Bidoof..."

"What? You need to catch two?" Joltfang asked, head tilted.

"Yeah, but we ran into some... complications."

Joltfang listened with much more calm than he had so far- and then grinned as widely as ever, his chest swelling with pride.

"Well well well!" He walked forward, grin splitting his face as he held his head high. "If that's what you have to do, I'm the Pokémon you need."

Musashi quirked an eyebrow. "And how would you be of support?"

"With the only way that works!" The Shinx pivoted on his paws, and trotted away in the distance. "Follow me, weaklings!"

He didn't even wait for their answer as he continued walking, and with little else to be done, Rei and Musashi decided to follow along. After all, what did they have to lose listening to that guy now?

"You! Let's fight! Today, we see who's strongest!"

Apparently just quite a bit of hearing, as the first thing Joltfang did upon reaching the area where Rei had shown impressive rolling capacity was jabbing a paw at a nearby Starly and unleashing his lacking indoor voice.

Rei and Musashi gnashed their teeth in pain as they covered their ears, hidden behind a nearby bush. The bird, after a moment's dizziness, fired back a half-lidded stare. "Jolty, I have no time for this today-"

"I'm invoking the sacred rules! You cannot escape me!"

Joltfang stomped down with a might somewhere between an imposing ruler's and a childish tantrum, with electric sparks to match.

Such a display of power, or perhaps a wish to safeguard his ears, made the bird roll his eyes. "Fiiine. But go gentle on me, right?"

The Starly flew downwards in the most unthreatened fashion, with all the enthusiasm of an office worker. Quite the constrast to Joltfang's eager grin - and the wink he gave his new companions.

Musashi gave a thumps up, and then relayed the news. "Everything is in position, Lord Rei!"

"Alright, then." Rei rummaged into his bag, placing a Poké Ball on the ground and taking aim. "Three... two... one..."

"Go!"

The kick was swift; the straight line of fire primed for Starly even moreso. By the time the bird realized the Poké Ball was coming, the device successfully bonked him and cluttered to the ground. A plume of smoke ensued.

"And Starly's caught as well!" shouted Rei, rushing towards the Ball and palming it with pride, while Musashi provided supportive clapping. With that, two out of three of his requirements were checked out.

"All thanks to me!" Joltfang strutted in all high and mighty, a grin on his face and a paw aimed at the now-occupied capture device. "Every Pokémon is honorbound to face each other with their lives at stake! And now, he's ours to use as we see fit!"

As Joltfang let out a booming, villain-worthy laugh, Musashi scratched his head. "Is that truly a law of Obsidian Fieldlands...?"

"Would've been nice to know it before." Rei suppressed his need to roll his eyes and groan.

Whether the law was real or just a way to keep Joltfang in check, it wasn't important at that moment. Instead, the Scorbunny threw down the Poké Ball gently, bringing the Starly back out.

It didn't take long for him to give all three other Pokémon an annoyed stare. "Oh, you've caught me."

Joltfang wasted no time in baring his fangs with gleeful abandon. "You are now *ours* ! We shall-"

"Sorry for the disturb, to make a long story short, I kinda need to catch a few of you guys," Rei said, cutting in right between the two

Pokémon and giving the Starly a sheepish smile. Joltfang glared daggers, but Rei tried to ignore it.

Which didn't help much, when Starly joined in with a glare of his own. "Are you a *Pokémon* working with those Galaxy Team guys?"

"It's a long story." After a nervous chuckle and a rub of his neck, Rei cleared his throat and tried to give himself a tone. "But pretty much, you're gonna get a comfy, safe place to stay in that will feed you as much as you need if you come with us now. I know I had to catch you and all, but well, I prefer to know if you're alright with it."

"First you capture me and then you make a deal? You're weird, you know."

"I've been enough of a pinball to know it sucks, so..." Rei sighed. As a trainer he could get away with just catching Pokémon and move on like it was nothing, but in his current condition, it felt *wrong* to just do so. Maybe it was just his new Pokémon instincts or something flaring up, but that didn't change what he wanted.

Joltfang stepped in with an even sharper glare. "What a waste! Are you really-mhmmh!"

Rei appreciated Musashi for silencing the Shinx with a Scalchop in the mouth, giving him the time to wait for Starly's response. The bird seemed to gauge his options carefully, shifting between the Pokémon in front of him. And then, he nodded.

"Well, the Fieldlands aren't that great a place, anyway. I'm in!"

The Scorbunny smiled, feeling a weight off his chest. "Thanks, you're doing me a *huge* favor."

"Someone mentioned free food and housing? I want some too!"

The new, squeaky voice came out of nowhere, heralding the shaking of some nearby spots of tall grass. The nearby Pokémon all turned

towards it, and as the speaker came into view, Rei's face went pale.

"No way. No way!" Rei's face-splitting grin could melt things with its brilliance.

It was none other than a Bidoof. And a slightly less dopey one, at that! Maybe his bad luck had finally looped all the way into things going well, for once.

The rodent blinked out in confusion. "Huh? Did I do something wrong?"

"Not in the slightest, my fellow. We were looking for one of your own, in truth." Rei raced closer to him, checking him out with an overabundance of excitement.

The Pokémon beamed back. "Really? Great!"

"But." Rei's gaze sharpened, looking over the Bidoof. "If you wanna join in, you gotta allow me to do something."

The Bidoof tilted his head. "What something?"

"You'll see. Just stand there."

Confused but not alienated, the Bidoof remained still where he was. The odd amount of preparations caught the interest of the remaining Pokémon, but he paid none of them mind as he grabbed another Poké Ball and palmed it in his paw.

"One, two, andddd..." He hopped closer, a grin over his face as he came inches away from the very puzzled Bidoof. "Go!"

He tapped the Ball over the Pokémon's, absorbing him inside. He held it still until the smoke came out and confirmed the capture.

And then, he pivoted over his heel and pointed the device skyward. "Yes! I have finally caught a Bidoof!"

He kept the Poké Ball held high, with the most winning smile in Hisui and pride for miles. The strange ritual gave him no shortage of confused looks from his companions, but Rei didn't care about it. He earned his little moment of vanity, appearance be damned!

And with all tasks finally achieved and Bidoof let free to roam with them, it was finally time to rejoin with the Survey Corps, as Rei and the others headed back to the Fieldlands's camp.

It didn't take long for Rei and his companions to reach the base camp again, striding onward at once. As they closed the distance, the Scorbunny spotted Laventon and Akari by the tent, discussing about some Lord something and strange patterns of weather.

The Scorbunny cleared his throat and waved his paw high. "Prof, Akari, we're back!"

The high-pitched voice caught the humans's attention, both of them turning around- and both blinked at the display. Rei capitalized on it, nodding for the trio of captures to stand in better view, which they quickly did (Joltfang, of course, pacing ahead of his compatriots).

Both the Professor and Akari approached them, with the girl in particular checking out all of the newcomers one by one while Laventon took some notes.

"Bidoof, Starly, and even a..." Akari grimaced, breaking eye contact with Joltfang. "A Shinx. You got all three."

"Is something wrong?" Rei frowned, idly checking the trio and wary of having failed some secret requirement or missed something obvious.

Akari gulped, continuing to avoid glancing over the Shinx. "Oh, nothing. Just, Shinx get me a bit uneasy, it's all."

"As you *should be* !" Joltfang's loud shout was probably naught but gibberish for the girl, but the way she jumped out of the way with a grimace made clear the message was conveyed anyway.

Rei frowned; he and that rambunctious guy definitely needed to talk things out more later. He really needed to figure him out, and probably - no, most *definitely* set some ground rules.

The Scorbunny put aside any thought of what was the Shinx's deal, however, as he spotted Laventon approaching. The man was still jotting down information on his notebook, but took a moment to turn towards the former human and nod at him with a beaming smile. "This is outstanding! If this is what you're capable of, our efforts in bringing the first Pokédex of Hisui to life will pay off eventually!"

Rei snickered at that, a paw over his heart and a smirk over his face. "All in a day's work, really!"

Laventon let out a good natured laugh at the former human's pride, one that Akari also shared into as she put some distance from the still-gleeful Joltfang. It was a balm after the day's escalating misadventures, for sure.

The older man then placed his notebook down, eyeing the tents behind them. "Well, with our task for the day achieved, I think we can prepare ourselves for return. Captain Cyllene will be pretty pleased."

"Great work, Rei." Akari knelt down, gave him a gentle pat over the head. "I'm going to help the Professor. You and everyone else wait here, alright?"

"S-sure." He looked the other way, gulping down and hiding his much redder than usual face.

The girl giggled, standing up again as she rejoined Laventon to prepare everything for the return to the Galaxy Team's headquarters, leaving the various Pokémon on their own for the time being.

And as the humans went away, Rei finally let himself fall on his back, crashing on the soft grass with a mighty, tired sigh, all of the day's tiredness finally catching up to him.

Musashi's eyes went wide, pitter-pattering his way to his liege and shaking him with force. "Lord Rei! Are you unwell?"

"Can I replace him?" Joltfang smirked as he paced closer, poking Rei's leg experimentally.

Both sets of action made Rei roll his eyes, groaning as he forced himself back up. Both Pokémon jumped out of the way, and earned themselves a glare.

"I'm *fine* ." The Scorbunny sighed and rubbed his forehead gently. "Just... whew. This was stressful."

It was really hard to believe how much had happened in the short span of that day so far. With all the fainting, the running and the battling of all kinds, it was only now that he had nothing else to think about that he realize how much he had to push himself, his whole body basically shut down from effort.

He had never felt so tired before.

"But at last we did it, thanks to our perseverance!" Musashi held his Scalchop high in victory, offering a quick look to the Shinx by his side. "And some help from our thundermancer, as well."

"Don't think too much of it. I'm only here for the future fighting." Joltfang gave a dismissive wave of his paw, and then glared towards Rei. "I expect a *lot* of action, Flamefeet."

Rei swallowed and elected to ignore it with a quick nod, which seemed to satisfy the Shinx enough to stop glaring. For now.

The former human exhaled, feeling every bone of his body aching still. Yet, he gave a look to all the Pokémon around him, the result of

all his efforts. The bunny smiled.

"Regardless, thanks, to all of you. Even Starly and Bidoof." He nodded to himself, turning towards the closest Pokémon to him. "But especially to you, Joltfang and Musashi."

Joltfang puffed his chest even more, his pride threatening to increase even more. Much different was Musashi's reaction, however, as the Pokémon walked closer to his trainer and shook his head.

"Actually..." The Oshawott cleared his throat, placing his Scalchop over his chest and closing his eyes in solemn declaration. "I have decided to cast aside the identity of Musashi, the Brave Fencer."

Rei quirked an eyebrow. "Huh?"

"I have not proved worthy of such a lofty title. Not when you were the bravest of us." The Oshawott formerly known as Musashi gave the Scorbunny a bow of respect. One in complete contrast to the grimace he wore a second later. "And, considering our newest associate, perhaps I should go for a less... demanding identity."

They both stared at Joltfang, currently busy psyching himself up with electricity around himself under Starly and Bidoof's intrigued gaze. Rei couldn't blame the choice, but shrugged out of saying so.

"Well, as long as you have fun. But still, everything went well, which means one thing." The bunny beamed, opening the satchel and producing his phone for all to see. "Victory selfie time!"

Shinx interrupted his self-appreciation session and raised an eyebrow. "Victory... selfie?"

"A sacred ritual of glorious celebration. It may involve long amounts of staring, however." Oshawott already placed his Scalchop back in place, and rubbed his fur to make himself presentable.

"Hah, good to know. No one celebrates like Joltfang!"

Both boisterous Pokémon rushed in at the same time and barely didn't bump their heads together as they reached Rei's side. They both pushed against the other until the camera managed to fit both, all while the other two wild Pokémon remained curiously a bit further away.

With the picture now set, Rei giggled a bit. "Come on, strike a good pose! And say 'cheese!'"

And just like that, a good moment was immortalized for everyone to remember.

Taking that picture felt much more momentous than a single selfie for Rei, however. It was a sign of what he achieved - what he *could* achieve, after an entire day spent running all over, being hit, failing to throw Poké Balls and dealing with the wildest Pokémon in more than one way.

That was likely going to be how his life would be for the foreseeable future. And yet, he didn't feel too worried, after surviving his first day. Even if he was sent to Hisui and all he got was a God Phone and long ears.

And so, as he pocketed his device and reconvened with the now ready Laventon and Akari, Rei and all the other Pokémon marched together for Jubilife Village, with a fulfilled mission behind them.

And with this, Rei's first mission for the Survey Corps reaches its end, with a new companion to boot!

This chapter took quite a bit to get through, between worries of not delivering a fun chapter and several commitments all in a row, but in spite of some worries I'm mostly satisfied with how things came out here. I did want Joltfang to be quite the opposite of Oshawott in spite of similar demeanor, as a glory-

seeking blood knight with an exaggerated sense of self. Here's hoping he made a good impression, though of course, you readers will be the judge in this sense. I will just say that I have some very fun plans ahead for this little battle- hungry Shinx.

As for Oshawott, I thought it would be funny to have him take a while to settle on an actual name given his general personality, and I hope the road to get to his true, actual name will be quite amusing. And look forward for several Shout-Outs, as I plan to have a lot of easter eggs in this little subplot.

Once again, I'd like to suggest people to check out another author, this time being LocCryo and his story *Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: See No Evil* . It's currently still in setup phase at just two chapters, but it features some interesting elements already on display and quite solid prose, and is very worth checking out. Considering how many Mystery Dungeon-based fics can easily reach several chapters of length, one that is still on the initial phases but with intriguing potential and an author quite invested in telling its story is an investment that comes highly recommended.

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Hoping to deliver next chapter in a much shorter timeframe, but until then, I hope you will keep looking forward to what's to come!